For

Mrs. G. C. Bass,

with the best wishes,

of the author

Frona E. W. Colburn

Pacific Grove, Calif

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YERMAH THE DORADO

The Story of a Lost Race

BY

FRONA EUNICE WAIT COLBURN

"It requires a great many shovelfuls of earth to buy truth"

— Swiss Proverb

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UTOPIA
C485Y

THIS VOLUME
IS DEDICATED TO THE
WHITE KNIGHTS
OF ALL LANDS AND OF ALL THE AGES
IN LOVING MEMORY OF
MY FATHER
JAMES LAFAYETTE SMITH

—Frona Eunice Wait Colburn

FOREWORD

This book "Yermah the Dorado," was first published at The Sign of the Lark, San Francisco, in 1897. The issue was limited to five hundred copies, mostly subscribed for by personal friends of mine. The notes, manuscript and plates were all lost in the fire of 1906.

The date of publication is of the utmost importance because the Llama City, Tlamco, the scene of this romance, was located in Golden Gate Park, where it was destroyed by earthquake, in the long ago.

Since the actual occurrence of 1906, the original story has been slightly revised, but not a line of the description of the earthquake has been changed, nor an incident added. Whoever lived through those days, as I did, will not need to be told why. The use of aeroplanes and wireless telegraphy, with the recent visit of a huge comet are additional reasons impelling me to reprint what is very like a pre-vision of things to be.

To me Golden Gate Park is a hallowed spot. As a place of refuge I saw an ephemeral city reared in a night of stress and misery. The beauty of a rebuilt modern metropolis will but serve to recall the vanished glory of the dream city ruled by the man who was the real El Dorado.

FRONA EUNICE WAIT COLBURN.

TO GOLDEN GATE PARK

Where once the Wisdom-City's temples rose
  Within her " Gates of Gold," our latter day
This noble pleasure ground but loves, and knows,
  Nor guesses where the fanes of Tlamco lay;
Yet who shall say what spell that vanished race
  Bequeathed forever to this mystic place?

For through this realm enchanted, wanderers stroll —
  Or from the Seven Seas, or dwellers near —
And cares forget, while from each weary soul
  Life's heavy burden slips — till peace reigns here
Where blue sky arches over flower and palm,
  And west winds whispering, breathe a healing balm.

Here creep the old and sad, so long denied
  The welcoming smile these sunny spaces hold;
Fond lovers weave their golden dreams beside
  Gay, laughing children counting poppy gold;
To all the Park brings rest, and sweet relief
  From work or pain, or haunting wraiths of grief.

— *Ella M. Sexton.*

YERMAH, THE DORADO
THE STORY OF A LOST RACE

CHAPTER ONE

YERMAH, the Dorado, was refreshed and invigorated by his early morning ride. It had been a voluntary gallop, and it would have been hard to say which found the keenest enjoyment in it; he, his horse Cibolo, or Oghi the ocelot, which ran beside them in long, slow leaps, covering much ground yet always alighting noiselessly and as softly as a cat.

It was a beautiful morning, one that would correspond to the first of June now — but this was in the long ago, when days and months were reckoned differently.

The tall grass and wild oats left ample proof of close proximity along the roadside by the fragments secreted in the clothing of Yermah and in the trappings of Cibolo. Oghi, too, could have been convicted on the evidence his formidable toes presented. Added to this was the indescribable scent of dew, of the first hours of day and the springtime of nature.

It was the first time since his arrival from Atlantis that Yermah had ventured alone outside the city limits. When once the temples, and marketplaces of Tlamco were left behind him, he had given Cibolo

the rein and abandoned himself to the exhilaration of going like the wind.

Tlamco, the Llama city, the name of which was unknown to the men who sought the mythical Kingdom of Quivera — that will-o'-the wisp land — supposed to be the center of the Amazon inhabited island of California of the very remote past. Tlamco vanished so completely that there were no traces perceptible to the men who founded Yerba Buena on the same peninsula ages after. Its existence would be laughed at by present day inhabitants of San Francisco were it not true that the hills in and around Golden Gate Park are living witnesses of great mathematical skill.

The first denizens built some of these hills and shaped others to give the diameters and distances of all the planets. Who of to-day will believe that Las Papas, or Twin Peaks, show the eccentricities of the earth's orbit to one fifty-millionths of its full size?

At present early morning milk-trains, and trucks loaded with vegetables from the outlying gardens intercept and mingle with the heavy wagons laden with meat from South City. In short, the modern city's food supply comes from the same direction in which Yermah rode. Conditions and people have changed since then, and so have many of the features of the locality itself.

South of what is known as the Potrero was a bay. Now it is a swamp, and the north and south points there are the remains of forts, although they appear to be nothing more than hillocks blown into shape by merest chance. To the west is a hill on which dwelt Hanabusa, the captain of the three-decked war-galleys, or balsas. Nearby was the signal tower

which could be seen from every eminence in the city. It guarded the western side of the sanded causeway leading from the marketplace in the center of Tlamco to the water's edge. Hanabusa's house afforded protection to the north side.

Yermah skirted the range of hills on the land side, where the granaries of his people were located and which accounted for the presence of the war-galleys and the defenses in that neighborhood. He rode down what is known as the old San Bruno Road, where he was kept busy returning the salutes of the workmen whose duty it was to produce, conserve and prepare food for their fellows.

Meeting Hanabusa near his house, Yermah dismounted to consult with him. While the men talked, Oghi lay in wait for a flock of birds, which had been frightened into rising from the ground. Oghi was more like the South American jaguar than any of the ocelots of Central America. In olden times these animals were plentiful on the Rio Grande, and were used by the sportsmen of the day for hunting, much as dogs are now employed.

This morning once fairly in the country, the quick eye of Oghi detected a fine buck deer surreptitiously grazing in a field of oats by the roadside. Instantly the ocelot crouched low and hugging the ground crept stealthily forward. The black-tail, soon conscious of danger, elevated its head adorned with a splendid set of antlers still in the velvet. Its nostrils were distended, and it sniffed the air suspiciously. Like a bolt from a gun the deer made a tremendous leap, and was off at top speed. Oghi continued to trail in a crouching position, which made him look like a long, black streak against the horizon. He

gained on the deer from the first, and when near enough made a furious spring.

The leap fell short, but Oghi lighted on the rump of the buck and nearly bore it to its haunches. The wounded animal shook off its assailant and plunged ahead desperately, but it was plain to be seen that it was badly hurt where Oghi's claws had torn out great pieces of flesh and hide.

The ocelot now changed tactics. All his cruel leonine nature was aroused by the exertion and the taste of warm blood. Instead of hugging the heels of his victim, he endeavored to run alongside near the shoulder where he could fix his sharp teeth in the throbbing throat. For a few moments they ran side by side, straight and even as a pair of coach horses.

Then, with a mighty cat-like spring, Oghi's long, slender body stretched out and up into the air. When he descended, his claws had closed on the jugular vein of the deer. For an instant there was no break in speed. The deer made two more leaps, then staggered, whirled once around, and victor and vanquished went heels over head together in the long grass.

Yermah kept close behind, putting Cibolo to his best paces in an endeavor to save the life of the deer. He called repeatedly to Oghi to let go his hold. Finally the creature reluctantly obeyed with a sullen growl. Not only were the main arteries and veins in the deer's throat severed, but the heavy blows had broken the shoulder-blade.

Yermah hastily fastened the chain he carried to the bull's-hide band on Oghi's foreleg, which was held in place by two smaller chains fastened to the animal's collar. As the captor licked the blood off his

chops, the death-struggles of his prey grew fainter, and finally ceased altogether.

Oghi was quite a character in his way, and enjoyed an unique reputation among the inhabitants of Tlamco. He came as a gift to Yermah from the Atlantian colonists of the Rio Grande. He seemed so disconsolate and lonely when first brought to his new home, that Yermah sent to his former region to secure the ocelot a mate. In the meantime, the young man told all his friends about it and promised his favorites the first litters which should follow this happy venture. Oghi's reputation for intelligence, docility and courage made every one feel fortunate in the prospect of owning some of the stock.

Pika, the mate, was an ocelot beauty and carried herself with all the haughty disdain a full knowledge of that fact might have inspired. When turned loose in the yard with Oghi, she flew at him instantly and whipped him unmercifully. In no circumstance would she allow him near her. Oghi submitted like a sheep. He even crawled flat on his belly and howled for mercy. In these encounters he kept close to the wall on the opposite side, and whenever possible scaled it with remarkable agility.

This unexpected outcome gave rise to great hilarity, although the consensus of opinion was that Oghi had behaved like a gentleman. There were men in those days capable of facing a hostile regiment, single-handed, but who capitulated unconditionally at sight of an irate female — so this idea is not entirely modern.

It may have been that an easy victory over Oghi caused Pika to over-estimate her fighting abilities, for she did not hesitate to attack a grizzly bear and

in so doing came to an untimely end. It was a rough-and-tumble fight, but a duel to the death from the beginning.

Had Pika been more wary, she would have kept well to the rear; but she foolishly got in the way of Bruin's right paw and the result was a skull split from nose to ear.

When Yermah's irreverent friends came to condole with him, he invited them to witness his endowment of Oghi with a badge of mourning. This was the bull's-hide band, worn on the left foreleg by means of which Oghi was always manageable. Suspended from the hook which fastened the leading chain was a leaden heart with the inscription—

SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF PIKA

which was indeed a sign manual of submission and servitude. If at any time during the rest of his life, Oghi showed signs of rebellion, Yermah had but to pull the chain and the left foreleg was doubled up close to the body, while the collar around the neck became uncomfortably tight.

Iaqua, Yermah's official residence, was surrounded by an immense octagonal enclosure, and was approached by two beautiful gates. The one due north closed a roadway composed of tiny sea-shells, extending to the bay and overlooking the Golden Gate. The other was a terminus of a foot-path of flagging which led to the Observatory. Here the adobe was laid in irregular forms and covered with stucco.

Iaqua's eight towers were circular in form and had battlements and winding stairways. Each was furnished with deep-set octagon loop-holes for observa-

tion, and comfortably accommodated twenty men. The entrance was a door opening into the courtyard and connecting with a passage-way under the terrace. It was this opening fitted with loopholes which really made the building a fortification.

The whole structure was flat-roofed, having battlements of hard wood plated with lead. The lower floor of each tower was used as a guardroom, being furnished with huge tables and benches which followed the outline of the room. There were stools of terra-cotta, porcelain and hard woods elaborately carved where the body-guard suite of the Dorado lived. In each tower, one above the other, were two sleeping apartments of equal size with mess-rooms attached.

As Yermah galloped up through the wide southern gate, the courtyard filled with members of his staff. As he swung lightly from the saddle, it was noticed that Cibolo showed signs of the morning work. Yermah led his charger to the stable door, and, as he was being rubbed down, gave him some salt and patted him affectionately.

Oghi took offense at this show of partiality, and leaping over the back of the horse, stood uncomfortably near Yermah, the hair along his spinal column on end and his tail straight and threatening. Yermah spoke sharply to the ocelot.

Disturbed by the commotion, a flock of parrots having the freedom of Cibolo's crib began to screech and to chatter, as if they not only comprehended but sympathized with Oghi's jealousy. In less than a minute they were vigorously fighting among themselves, and Yermah, unable to make himself heard above the noise and din, fled incontinently.

Cibolo came from Poseidon's stud, whence his ancestry was traced back many generations. He had all the qualities which conduced to endurance and speed. Cibolo's bright eyes gave evidence of energy and splendid nerve, and he carried himself like a king. His straight neck and perfect joints were connecting links of a muscular system of great power. In the center of a wide, flat forehead was a star, and the glossy coat of hair distinctly oulined a delicate tracery of veins. The nostrils were wide and open, while the mobile ears, set well apart were small and straight. Never in his life had the horse been struck a blow. He was docile, obedient, affectionate and intelligent.

With fine-cut horn brushes, the groom set to work removing every particle of dust and sweat from his skin, smoothing every hair into its proper place, until it shone like fine satin. The mane and tail were combed like human hair and plaited into tight strands, which would be loosened only when he was harnessed to the chariot, later in the day. As became the station of his master, the head ornaments, saddles, coronas and trappings worn when hitched to the chariot were masses of jewels, feathers, silver bells and embroidery.

Yermah went directly to his private apartments in the eastern quadrangle of Iaqua. The approaches to this part of the house were screened by trellises covered with flowering creepers. After a plunge and a shower of both salt and fresh water, followed by a liberal use of lavender spray, of which the Dorado was extremely fond, he emerged from the hands of his dresser with a glow of health and happiness on his face. He lingered but a moment in the

hallway, then crossed over to the extreme eastern triangle, which was a private sanctuary where he often went to consult the oracle Orion on personal matters.

The statue was of carved alabaster exquisitely proportioned. It represented the figure of a man, with diamond eyes, whose head supported a jeweled miter terminating in a point. The belt which confined the loose robe at the waist line had three solitaires of purest water which were supposed to grow dim if the petitioner were not in good health or was in danger. If these stones became opaque or colorless, the phenomenon gave rise to most dismal forebodings.

Orion was placed in a square niche exactly facing the rising sun, holding a fan and a sickle in the hand. A window of jeweled glass let in the first rays of the morning, lighting up the gold and silver ornamentation back of the figure. The right side was of gold, the left of silver — one typifying the sun, the other the moon. Back of the head, suspended from the ceiling, was a splendid panache of green feathers dusted with jewels, and above this was a crystal ball, whose knobby surface reflected rainbow colors in circles and zones. At the feet was a bas-relief representing a golden humming bird flying over water which was a symbol of Atlantis.

The prayer-rug in front of the statue was of ivory, woven in strips. It was as flexible as cloth and beautifully fine. The double-key pattern, characteristic of pre-historic America, formed the border; but this was much broken and most effective with its shadings of black, skillfully intermingled with filigree carvings. Pastils of incense burned on the altar — peace and quiet reigned supreme.

The Dorado was a child of promise; that is to say, he had been set apart as the future ruler of the island of Atlantis and her outlying colonies. By the Brotherhood of the White Star he had been consecrated, before he was born, to a life of service. Yermah was a veritable sun-god, and as the subdued light fell over his long, wavy blond hair and beard, while kneeling before the oracle, he was a specimen of manhood fair to look upon.

Tall, broad-shouldered and athletic, with not a pound of flesh too much, his countenance was as open and frank as that of a child. His large, round, clear-seeing blue eyes were placed exactly on a normal line — eyes whose truthfulness could not be questioned; and the slightly arched heavy brows indicated physical strength and mental power. Yermah had a large hand evenly balanced and well formed. The joints of the fingers were of equal length, ending in round pink nails, denoting liberal sentiments as well as love of detail. The small, clean-cut ear helped to bear out other testimony of his having been born during the morning hours. Ever mindful of the little courtesies of life, both in bestowing and receiving, he was a model of propriety and dignity even as a youth.

Yermah possessed a nature which aroused others to the highest degree of activity. Unfortunately this activity was as liable to be against as for his interests. He was high-spirited and resolute, but generous and sympathetic. As a friend he was considerate and faithful. As an orator he was magnetic, and irresistible; and as the shoulders are the thermometer of feeling he made many gestures with them.

On the spur of the moment, under the dominating influence of emotion, the Dorado sometimes acted without thinking, but he was incapable of harboring malice. In later life this qualified him for arbitration, when the necessities of the people demanded its exercise.

"The peace of a perfect day be with thee, Yermah," said Akaza, the hierophant.

He kissed the Dorado on the right cheek, the forehead, and then on the left cheek, as he stood clasping the young man's arms, murmuring the names of the three attributes of Divinity. Only an initiate of the highest order ever gripped an arm in precisely the same manner as Akaza had done, and Yermah was gratified by the distinction and favor shown.

"The same sweet grace be with thee now and always," was Yermah's greeting in return as he carried the long, thin, white beard of the old man to his lips.

Then adroitly drawing Akaza's arm through his own, he led the way to a nook in the private sitting-room facing the sanctuary, on the threshold of which he had encountered his visitor.

"Forgive my keeping thee waiting," he continued. "I yielded to the seductions of the balmy air and Cibolo's easy gait, riding farther out than I at first intended."

"It were easier to make excuse hadst thou not unnecessarily cast insinuations on Cibolo," answered Akaza, smiling. "It is not fair to the horse, since he is not here to make known how he was encouraged and abetted in his labor of love. I have but arrived from Ingharep, having completed calcula-

tions of the planets concerning our journey to Yo-Semite.[1] Walking in slowly, I was glad of the few moments' breathing time."

He helped himself to some salted melon and dried anise seeds on the platter which his host pushed toward him, but he refused the cigarette the latter had rolled of corn-husks and filled with fine tobacco. Yermah picked at the anise seeds after ordering a pot of chocolate and some corn wafers.

"Wouldst thou advise me to go at once, to offer this young priestess asylum here while negotiations are pending between Eko Tanga, the emissary of the land of the Ian of which she is a native, and the Monbas, holding her as hostage?"

The hierophant hesitated and looked sharply at his auditor before replying.

"Thou hast still to overcome that which bars the entrance before thou hast completed the labors of initiation, and I am not unmindful of thy real destiny. Yes," he continued deliberately, and as if the fate of an immortal soul hung on his words, "yes. I am prepared to go with thee into the Yo-Semite. Whatever the result of the expedition, I will help thee to endure."

As he ceased speaking Yermah noticed that he held both thumbs tightly and sat motionless, save that his lips moved silently. His piercing dark eyes focused in empty space, and he seemed for a moment far away from his surroundings.

"And the gold which I came here to find — does it lie in that direction? Will my initiation into the Sacred Mysteries be completed upon its discovery?"

Yermah was carefully noting Akaza's abstraction.

[1] The modern name is preferably employed.

"The gold thou art to find lies in that direction, and when found the Brotherhood of the White Star will welcome thee."

"Then thy long journey from Atlantis will be crowned with success, and we can return like a pair of conquerors — thou to preside over the temple whose foundations were laid the day I was born, I to tip its spires with virgin gold. Then the initiation, and I am ready to assume my duties as Grand Servitor. There is but one short year in which to accomplish this."

"True child of the sun, full of hope and impatient of delay! Youth is thy eternal heritage."

"Youth, indeed!" said Yermah, with mock severity. "Thirty times will the earth have encircled the sun when the next day of my nativity arrives. I hope soon after that to be a family man, staid and sober."

"What is this about a family?" queried a newcomer, a swarthy son of Mars, who stood in the doorway. His head was without covering other than a band of red leather, having a bull's head and horns of agate, and a solitaire for Aldebaran in the center with a gold boss on each side. He wore the quilted cotton tunic of a soldier and his feet were protected by leather sandals tipped with gold.

On the lower arm near the elbow, were several long strips of leather, cut like a fringe, with different devices at the ends to show his occupation as well as his prowess at arms and in games; also, the temple or priesthood to which he belonged. Those on the right arm indicated strength and skill; those on the left his aspirations, social and spiritual.

Over this arm was thrown a cloak of perfumed leather, ornamented with lustrous dyes in soft col-

ors, which found a congenial background in the pliant, velvety surface of the ooze finish. Around his neck was a gorget, from which depended seven rows of beads each of a different color.

He was a younger man than Yermah, and quite as handsome, but in a different way. He came in with a brisk step, without hesitation, and it was evident from his manner that he belonged to the place. He greeted Akaza as Yermah had done, and stood waiting to be asked to join the conclave.

Yermah handed him a curiously wrought gold cup filled with chocolate, made as only the Aztecs, of all later races, knew how to do. It was thick like custard, with a layer of whipped cream on top, served ice cold and eaten with a spoon. Its nutritive qualities made it a household confection, and it was used much as bouillon is to-day. With it was eaten thin corn-meal wafers, rolled into fanciful shapes and browned until crisp and dry.

"Thou art come in time to add thy counsel to mine, Orondo," said Akaza, kindly. "Yermah stands in need of thy assistance in a state matter of importance, one which is certain to be fraught with momentous consequences to all concerned."

"I thank thee for thy courtesy. But I thought thou wert discussing marriage when I came in. That, I believe, is my next duty, and I have unwonted interest. As Yermah is vowed to celibacy, I fail to comprehend the import of his words."

Again Akaza fortified himself against conflicting emotions, and was silent.

"Our spiritual leader bids us offer aid to the high priestess, Kerœcia, at present with her followers

worshiping in the Yo-Semite. I am expected to visit her there and thou must bear me company."

"Thou hast but to command me. It were best to go in state, as this may incline them to peaceful disposition toward our future. In the valley of the Mississippi [1] they already have strong position, and could harm me infinitely when once I begin operations there. It were impolitic to expose the copper deposits in that region as the metal is growing scarce in the land of Mexi, and we would perish without it."

"Thou wilt not see me again until we are ready for our journey; I have need to be alone," said Akaza, as he held up his hands in benediction, forming an outline of the sacred fire on the altar.

Both men arose and saluted respectfully, and, without further words, Akaza passed from the room.

[1] Modern name preferably employed.

CHAPTER TWO

THE CITY OF TLAMCO — ITS TEMPLES AND MARKETPLACES

THE favorite breathing-place of the San Francisco of to-day is the site of what was once the Llama city, Tlamco, stretching from the Panhandle entrance at Golden Gate Park to the beach at the Cliff House rocks. It was a city of seven hills, marking the orbits and the diameters of the planets, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune, as well as forming a map of the Pleiades.

This ancient abode of the Atlantian colonists in California was laid out in circles, with a large temple in the center, near the east end of Golden Gate Park at the inter-section of Haight and Shrader Streets. From this point were twelve radiating streets, intersected by four principal avenues, constructed on the cardinal points of the compass.

The one to the east led to Park Hill, which was terraced up to Mount Olympus on the south, and continued on to the East Temple fortress.

The western avenue led through the center of the park proper to Round Top, or Strawberry Hill, now ornamented with an artificial waterfall and an encircling lake. This hill is a natural rock, upon which was constructed the Temple of Neptune.

The corresponding thoroughfare on the north led

to the Observatory and main fortress on Lone Mountain. These roadways were crowned with fine sand, still found in abundance in the dunes in the immediate vicinity.

There were tall three-faced obelisks of dark-red sand-stone at the outside limits of the streets, while the inner terminals were marked by corresponding pillars of marble, similarly decorated. Single and double cross-bars at the top of each of these were hung with huge beaten-brass lanterns.

It was these statue obelisks, twelve in number, representing Mercury in the twelve hours, which gave the name of Tlamco to the city. The cognomen signified Wisdom.

These columns had three faces which literally pointed the way. The countenance on the right was that of a bearded old man; the middle face a laughing, sinister one, while that on the left was of a youth looking dreamily out into the distance. The shafts were placed so that the young sun-god faced the orb rising in the east, symbolical of the future; the center denoted the present, and reflected the sun at midday, while the old man fronted the west. Sunset typified Saturn, the Father Time of to-day.

The figures were armless, and their legs and feet were incased in iron coffins set on square bases of black basalt. The obelisks proper were tapering, and at the points were covered with white enamel. The lamps hanging from the cross-bars were furnished with opalescent glass globes, and on the apex of the obelisks were balls of the same material radiating the light in myriad rain-bow colorings. Cut deep in the basaltic base was the inscription:—

I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE

which is a Gnostic interpretation of redemption, and at that time had reference to the course of the sun. The Way was Horus, the ray of wisdom shining through the darkness; the old man was Truth, or experience; while the center was Life, or the Light-Giver. The iron coffin was the belt of Orion and had reference to the death of the material world.

Esoterically, the belt of Orion is the band of causation, to loosen which, and to free ourselves from its influence, solves the riddle of life itself.

In the center of the city was the Temple of the Sun with twelve sides and four main entrances which overlooked the avenues. Its minarets and domes were tipped with gold. There was a dome over each doorway, and a larger one in the center, which terminated in a truncated spire. Under this was a circular hall surmounting twelve arches, resting on an equal number of pillars which represented the astral giants holding up and guarding the Cosmos.

The capital of each pillar was carved into the semblance of the face of a young virgin with an inscrutably mystic expression. On her head was a monster serpent biting the tail of another on the right. The bodies of the serpents ran in wavy lines around the recesses at the back of the arches, where the head in turn held in its mouth the tail of the preceding one, forming a long meander around the hall. On them, and commencing at the northeast corner, was inscribed a hymn to the Cosmic Virgin:—

EAST.

O thou who in thine incomparable beauty risest from the deep!
Thou who dwellest in all form, and givest life to all emanations!
Thou, Everta, who ridest on the whirlwind!
Gird thy children with the armor of justice.

SOUTH.

Thou who at thy rising doth manifest the splendor of truth,
And at thy meridian causest the fruit of the earth to ripen in its season,
Give, O Horo! at thy setting, peace to all thy children.

WEST.

Thou who dwellest in the manifest and the invisible,
And makest one the astral deep and the mountain of substance,
Grant, O Dama! union to the souls of thy people.

NORTH.

Thou whose sandals crush the head of malice and discord
And who dost establish on the rock of eternity thy seal of power,
Make, O Gharep! on thy right hand a dwelling for the brethren of Tlamco.

The recesses facing the cardinal points led to the four entrances; the remaining eight were curtained off, and used as civil courts. In each corner was a pair of winged mastodons, facing each other. Their out-stretched wings touched and formed a sharp angle. On the breast of each mastodon was a jeweled lamp of sacred fire.

Directly under the central dome was a concave

counter-part, brilliant with jeweled crystals, from the pinnacle of which was suspended a gilt ball held in place by four golden chains. The globe was a sunburst with horizontal rays. The serpent meander on the outer wall back of the recesses gave the orbit of the intermercurial planet Vulcan, to the same scale as the gilt ball did of the sun. Underneath the radiating globe was a porphyry disk of equal diameter, symbolic of the fire on the altar.

This central temple, typical of active life, was the scene of great public ceremonies, such as the reception of ambassadors, and there the awards for all civic honors were bestowed. The floor was a circle of radiating tiles, twelve red, alternating with an equal number of yellow. Around the center palladium were twenty-four seats for the Council of State, with the one at the south raised for the Chief.

The populace were allowed access to the building and to assent to or to disagree with the proceedings of the Council. These men, in a material sense, represented the twelve labors of Hercules. They pictured this personality of the sun as old and eloquent; and a councilor failing in proper persuasion and ability to reason was driven out. It was necessary for him to be an experienced and ready debater, because his colleagues, in groups of six, challenged his statements — one set pathetically, one in ridicule, one in denunciation and another in denial.

If the members of the Council quarreled, the sitting was adjourned at once, and no further meeting was lawful until the disputants took a solemn oath that they were reconciled. News of such an occurrence spread over the city like a flash. It was considered a great breach of decorum for a man to

speak without consideration for another's feelings, or in a loud, angry voice while in the Council Chambers.

Yermah had four advisers, who in turn sat as Chief Councilors. These were Akaza, Orondo, Setos and Alcamayn.

There were also one hundred and sixty warrior priests in his personal suite, quartered in the fortifications around Iaqua. Some of these were descendants of the pioneers who founded the city; others were there by honorable promotion for service rendered the state.

Yermah, alone, was accountable to the Grand Council of Atlantis, while Akaza was the only representative of the hierarchy. He led the white magicians out of Atlantis when black magic gained supremacy, twenty years prior, and had only returned in time to accompany Yermah on his tour of inspection through the outlying colonies.

Conforming to the general outline of the temple enclosure, but on a lower eminence, was a twelve-sided plaza which was the marketplace of Tlamco. Every street and avenue converged upon it, and it was always alive with men, women and children on traffic bent. In deep porticos facing the outer circle, were booths and bazaars where everything required by the population was for barter and exchange. Like the Temple of the Sun in the center, this beehive of industry had an outside circle describing the orbit of Mars, typical of the curious warfare which trade was to wage in later times, between man's temporal and spiritual welfare.

Long lines of white and black horsehair reatas were carried to the top of the truncated spire on the

temple, and made fast to the base of a colossal figure of Hercules, which was of madrono wood — indigenous to this locality. The wood is as hard as metal, and the statue was completely covered with fish-scales and feathered plates of solid silver so neatly put together as to appear like a casting. The face and other fleshy parts were treated to a liberal coating of oil and copal, giving them a smooth and metallic appearance.

The other end of the hair rope was fastened to one of the inner obelisks. These were novel bulletin boards; for each day's transaction in the market was heralded by the appearance of many small colored flags flying above the particular section in active trade, or to announce the arrival of fresh supplies.

Akaza lived on Round Top, in the Temple of Neptune. The monastery, which was occupied by the highest order of initiates, was surrounded by high white walls. The temple itself was square, four stories high, and had entrances facing the cardinal points. Here were tall trees and deep solitude, away from the bustle and turmoil of traffic.

Akaza stepped into the Council Chamber on his way to the monastery after his visit to Yermah. Alcamayn, the jeweler, was presiding, and Setos, the heap of flesh, was urging the necessity for sending a deputation of merchants into the territory of the Mazamas, which extends from the Sierra Nevada and Coast Ranges of mountains on the southeast, to the confines of Behring Sea on the north and west. Mazamas signified mountain climbers and was not the name of a nation, race or tribe.

Traveling merchants in those days were not a set

of pack-saddle peddlers, as they became in later times. They were a distinct guild and were allowed to carry manufactured articles which they were free to exchange for anything made or grown by another people. They went about with many attendants and were always treated with consideration, sometimes performing diplomatic service connected with trade relations and in exceptional cases acting as spies.

"The Mazamas are not of our faith. They are nature-worshipers, and must fail to achieve a high place in the affairs of this continent. They have been in rebellion against our cousins of Ian, and it is the part of prudence to look upon them with suspicion."

"Will Setos be kind enough to state definitely what he expects to accomplish by dispatching a delegation from the guilds in his group to a friendly territory?" asked Alcamayn. "If war is the purpose, Orondo must decide; if for religious propaganda, then the hierophant, Akaza, should be here to speak."

"I am here to speak," declared Akaza, coming forward. "My voice is for a visit to the Mazamas, but not in the manner proposed by Setos."

Setos flushed — hot and uncomfortable. He was not intentionally untruthful, but he could not let an opportunity pass unimproved when a keen, sharp transaction would materially benefit his section of the industrial guild.

Akaza looked straight at him and said quietly, "I will not have spies sent into the house of a friend."

"Will the hierophant enlighten us as to his wishes?" asked Alcamayn, respectfully.

"Yermah, Orondo, Setos, Rahula, and Ildiko, with proper following, will accompany me on a friendly mission to the high-priestess, Kerœcia."

"Are we to know the nature of this mission?" queried Setos.

"It is my wish that the high-priestess visit Tlamco. We offer our services as arbiters between her tribesmen and the government of Ian."

"Has the time for this undertaking been decided?"

"The hour of departure has not been named, but it will be accomplished while the guild of arts is in the seat of judgment. The Dorado desires that Alcamayn serve in his stead. He will not be long absent."

Alcamayn arose, folded his hands across his breast with the open palm turned inward, and inclined his head profoundly. There was a burst of applause, and an expression of acquiescence from the audience, which pleased Alcamayn mightily. He was a young Atlantian, not quite acclimated to Tlamco, and just beginning to exercise his prerogative as a favorite of Yermah's foster-father, Poseidon.

Noting that it was near the noon hour, Akaza said, making the hierarchal sign of benediction:

"Have done! If Alcamayn will go with me to the Observatory, I will fix the time of our journey, also its duration, that he may be better able to devote his energy to the cause of his fellow-servants. May the sun preserve and keep us free from malice and disease — two mortal enemies of the soul."

As one man they responded: "Haille, Akaza! Haille!"

Setos was primarily a man of stomach. With his

reddish-brown cloak of coarse cloth swinging loosely from his shoulders, and shining neck-ornaments aggressively in evidence, he elbowed his way out of the building, hastening into the stalls where fresh vegetables and fruits were laid out in tempting array. Setos's barter was for cucumbers and squashes, giving in exchange taos of tin, which he redeemed later, with bags of chalk, kalsomine and staff. He was careful to see that the custom of pelon was strictly enforced.

For each regular customer a tiny tin cylinder was hung up in the stalls, in full view, marked with the name and number. For every purchase made a bean was dropped into the cylinder, and at stated times these were removed and counted. Sixteen beans entitled the customers to a rebate in commodities.

Setos's square jaws relaxed and his thin lips smacked with satisfaction on seeing some luscious melons. He had already selected one, bespeaking his good digestion and critical eye, when his daughter, Ildiko, the Albino, called to him:

"Thou by whom I live, Setos, the wise father, come with me to Rahula in the bazaar of sweet odors. She awaits us there."

"What mischief hast thou been planning this fair day? Is it new raiment or a bit of candied sweets?" questioned Setos, as he followed Ildiko from the food section past piles of cotton in bales, wool, flax, and silk in the raw state, to where the manufactured articles were displayed.

She did not pause in the section devoted to dress or ornament, giving only a passing glance to the tapestries, pottery, enameled and jeweled vessels, baskets and rugs lying about in confused heaps.

"It is neither of these," she explained as they went along. "I crave thy judgment on a new sweet coffer fashioned by Alcamayn. He ornamented it according to my direction."

"Because that foolish man has humored an idle whim of thine, must I come to barter? Out upon both of ye!"

"Rahula is already bargaining for one of the leather pockets held in a filigree of gold. Even widows may carry these. Thou knowest that she is very strict in decorum and temple service. She says that perfumes are acceptable to the Brotherhood, and even a vestal may use them in her hair."

Ildiko, daughter of the moon, knew how to play upon the weakness of her fellows and was well aware of her father's predilections. "Thou hast no words of condemnation for Rahula," she pouted.

They turned into the portico where the perfumers' bazaars were located before Setos could answer. The young woman waited for the effect of mingled odors on a nature whose whole bent and inclinations were toward the appetites. By the time his senses were fully alive to the seductive fragrance, Rahula was speaking to him. She was past-mistress of the art of flattery.

"There is no need to commend thee to the keeping of the gods of magic, Setos. Every lineament of thy noble face bespeaks exalted favor."

Setos was fatally weak with women. He knew it, and alternately made love to, or abused, them.

"The finger of Time has failed to touch thee," he replied, removing his conical hat, and holding it across his stomach with both hands, "nor hast thou forgotten the offices of speech."

Rahula, who had risen, made the usual sign of submission with her long, thin fingers. As she looked intently from father to child, she quickly discerned that Ildiko's pink countenance was puckered into a frown.

"Has the little weaver, Ildiko, told thee of her latest success at the loom?" she asked with fine tact.

Ildiko made a motion of dissent, and laid her forefinger across her upper lip. None knew better than she that silence was impossible. It suited her evasive disposition to make mystery of the most trivial circumstance; she was in reality delighted with the sensation she was making. Many of the shop-keepers and some of the passers-by gathered to examine the roll of fine, gossamer-silk tissue, which Rahula adroitly drew out of the perfumed pocket held in her hand. Setos may be forgiven the glow of pride and satisfaction with which he surveyed the product.

At this moment Ildiko reached over and picked up the identical jeweled coffer which she had in mind when she went in search of her father. To the feminine eye her coveting was entirely justified, and when she managed to bring the dainty bauble between the silken veil and Setos's focus of vision, he was still smiling in a pleased manner. She leaned on him affectionately, and said in a coaxing tone:

"The water-lily design set with brilliants was my idea. I got the suggestion from the pond in our garden, when the fountain left a fine spray like dewdrops in the heart of the lilies growing there. Dost thou see thy favorite rushes in the twisted lines on the mouth and handles?"

Setos could hold out no longer.

"Must I find thee a golden chain for support?" he queried, half petulantly.

History fails to record why a certain type of man always finds fault with what he knows in his soul he must do for his women-folk. Setos was troubled with that "little nearness" which has rendered the Scotch of later times famous.

"If the chief of the merchants' guild will send some of his excellent wine of maguey in exchange, we vendors of sweet odors will be content. A chain, which we can procure from our neighbors, the artificers in gold, will be included in the purchase price."

Setos was about to conclude the transaction, when Rahula said:

"Alcamayn has confided to me his intention of making a chain of special design, which he will present to Ildiko, with consent of Setos."

Without further parley Setos led the way out of the stalls. When he halted, it was in front of a booth where his beloved wine of maguey was kept in abundance. There was a private entrance to the enclosure through which Setos passed, followed by the two women.

With a show of special interest, accompanied by an insinuating smile, Rahula said: "Hast thou a secret in the fabrication of this drink unknown to other makers?"

Setos shook his head in vigorous negation and continued giving his order for refreshing drinks. Ildiko preferred pulque. Rahula ordered metheglin, a spiced drink made by boiling fragments of beeswax and honey together, allowing it to ferment after it has been skimmed and clarified.

"Wilt thou hold it impertinent in me to ask thee,"

continued Rahula, as soon as she could attract the attention of Setos, "to what process thou art indebted for the superior quality of thy wine of maguey?"

"It is made from the guava plant cut in the dark of the moon, but roasted and matured in the light of that orb. Care in manipulation does the rest." Then lowering his voice and making a grimace as he winked, knowingly, he continued:

"No one suspects that my bottles are made of pliant glass and that only the covering is of goats' skin."

Standing with faces toward the east, they bowed their heads reverently; without a word they drank, not heartily, but in moderate sips. When they had swallowed the third mouthful, they resumed their seats. The women nibbled at honey-cakes and salted nuts, while Setos rolled a cigarette. Before lighting it, he said:

"Akaza, the hierophant, announced in the Council Chamber at meridian that a visit of state is soon to be made to the high-priestess, Kerœcia. Thou art to be my companions to the Yo-Semite, where the Monbas tribes are at the festival of renewal."

"Must we countenance the rites of these childish worshipers of the four elements?" demanded Rahula. Intolerance was one of the bonds of sympathy between them.

"I raised that question in Council, but Akaza vouchsafed no decided answer."

Both were silent for a moment, busy with the same train of thought.

"Oh, that we had some of the flying vehicles of thy invention in Atlantis! We could then make the journey without hardship or fatigue," said Ildiko.

Setos and Rahula quickly exchanged a meaning look, then cast furtive glances about to see if Ildiko had been overheard.

"Let us go hence," said Setos, irritably. "Speech is the pale, silvery reflection of the moon, my daughter, while silence is the golden rays of the sun and the wisdom of the gods. I charge thee keep a closer watch over thy tongue. It is an unruly member and performs the same office as a two-edged sword."

When it came time to separate, Seto said: "Akaza leads us. Yermah and Orondo go also; while Alcamayn remains and serves in our stead. I do not doubt the loyalty of our new subjects; but Yermah seems to find it prudent to leave some of his own countrymen at the helm."

He spoke in a dissatisfied way — the reflex of his own mind. It is impossible for the best of us to see beyond the reflection of ourselves; so, Setos attributed to Yermah motives which would have actuated himself in a similar situation.

Rahula, the fish-goddess, speculated on her way home as to how much Ildiko really knew of the reasons which impelled her father to leave Atlantis. She shrewdly guessed that his presence in the camp of the white magicians was a matter of expediency rather than conviction, but valued her position as companion and confidante of Ildiko too highly to jeopardize it by an injudicious question.

Rahula was content to let matters shape themselves. Her ambitions found satisfaction in the encouragement Ildiko gave Alcamayn. She was a born matchmaker and intrigante and knew that Ildiko was the apple of her father's eye despite his petulancy and

parsimony. Setos was a man of ardent love-nature whose affections had not all been buried with his wife. Rahula's gray hair and parchment skin did not let all hope die within her.

CHAPTER THREE

THE VIRGINS OF THE SUN AND THE VOICE OF TLAMCO

ALCAMAYN, the fop, and Akaza, "the old man of the band," as he was familiarly spoken of by all classes, presented a striking contrast as they walked toward the Observatory, which was enclosed in a circular wall and dedicated to Jupiter.

Akaza, tall, spare and sinewy wore a cloak of brocade in varying shades of green shot with silver discs. It was fastened to a shoulder collarette, set with pearls imbedded in hollow glass beads containing mercury. His breast-plate of bronze had a gold and silver inlay, while his long, thin white hair fell over his shoulders and the crown of his head was tonsured in honor of the sun. Fastened by the cord at his waist was a cluster of narcissus and lilies. He carried a green jade tao, surmounted by an eagle, in his right hand, showing that he commanded in the name of science instead of war.

Alcamayn was small, round-shouldered, hook-nosed and bushy of eye-brow. His small beady eyes had a shifty downward glance as if he were intent on examining the ground at his companion's side. He had been a sufferer from small-pox and he was extremely sensitive concerning his facial disfigurement.

Unable to submit to the control of others, he was

a swaggerer, a braggart, and very resentful. Every little slight irritated him and he was given to brooding over his wrongs. When he had magnified the promptings of wounded vanity and selfishness into a veritable mountain, he struck back and at the most unexpected time.

As an off-set to these disabilities, he had sterling honesty, unswerving loyalty to Akaza and Yermah, and he was the most skillful artificer in metals and precious stones in all Tlamco. He was inventive and original, having added many fine pieces to the collection of beautiful vessels in the temples and at Iaqua. He had all the instincts of a gambler and on more than one occasion came dangerously near indulging in the forbidden prank of drinking too much.

His expert knowledge of precious stones enabled him to display magnificent jewels and he often discoursed learnedly on their speed, refraction and temper, much as lovers of gems have done in every age since.

Alcamayn wore amethysts for luck, and usually a tunic of ochre yellow richly trimmed with peacock feathers and silk fringes. His head-piece was a high cap of white lambskin. On his feet were jeweled sandals and chamois leggins were met at the knee by a full short cotton skirt, having the figures of the zodiac embroidered around the hem in a bewildering mixture of brilliant hues.

On the sides of Lone Mountain, which the men were rapidly approaching, were several small mounds, still plainly indicated. Deep tanks were hollowed out on the top of each of these, having the circular bottom and sides lined with cement and filled with

filtered water. In addition to serving as observation pools for the sidereal system, these tanks furnished drinking water for the cavalry and infantry camps situated on the right and left hand side of the main buildings.

A circular tower of red sandstone and brick rose in the center of the mountain itself. On the inside was a stone stairway, having landings at the various windows, where there was room enough for such lenses and apparatus as was necessary to fully observe the moon and stars imaged in the pools below.

The reflection of the sun in these pools marked the hours of the day and time was very sensibly measured by studying the sidereal system. By a nice adjustment, the lenses revolved with the earth's real motion. The Atlantians and all of their descendants studied the reflection of the planets and stars in a pool of filtered water sunk below the earth's surface.

The tower tapered toward the top, and under an eight-sided pyramidal roof hung a massive copper bell, which was struck to proclaim the hours. Around the circle were chime bells, one for each of the five-note scale; and these were so grouped that by hearing them one knew which temple service was indicated. When it was time to go to a temple, these bells were rung continuously twelve strokes; then a full interval of rest when the process was repeated three times.

The "Voice of Tlamco" as the huge central bell was called, rang at dusk, warning all pedestrians to go to their dwellings. Licensed healers of the priestcraft and patrols were the only persons allowed on the street at night, except on extraordinary occasions,

and then, the " Voice of Tlamco " tolled with wonderful effect.

Lower down, covering much of the ground now occupied by San Francisco proper were the ambulance sheds, battering-rams and other paraphernalia used in warfare. These were enclosed by a wall which skirted the water's edge, not where the sea-wall now is, but as the water-front was known to the founders of Yerba Buena.

As Akaza and Alcamayn neared the entrance of the Observatory they met a procession of Virgins of the Sun, coming from the Temple of Venus. It was the duty of these virgins to replenish the sacred fires kept burning continuously on the towers and in the temples throughout the city. A crystal lens and a bit of cotton was used to focus the sun's direct rays and imprison its fires. Once ignited the flame was held sacred and constantly fed, lest disaster should befall the entire tribe. On the apex of the octagonal belfry was a twelve-sided urn filled with charcoal, upon which, with proper ceremonies, four times in twenty-four hours were placed sticks of copal and cedar. At midnight and at sunrise this function was performed by a selected order of priesthood. At midday and at sunset it was done by the vestals.

As the women advanced, Akaza and Alcamayn saluted — Akaza, by carrying his open palms even with his forehead on each side; Alcamayn, by the sign of submission. To emphasize his symbol of equality Akaza said:

" Thou shalt make me thy servant."

" Thou shalt make us to go through fire and water for thee," they responded in unison, making the same

obeisance as Alcamayn had done, bending the knee and with a downward gesture of the right hand.

The jeweler was included in the comprehensive bow given in passing but no further words were spoken. He did not attempt to conceal his respect and admiration; the vestals were equally frank in their curiosity. They had seen but few men so fastidious in dress, and there was a difference between his general appearance and that of the men of Tlamco.

Passing through the gateway a confusing scene greeted the visitors. Here two bands of warriors had been going through a quaint manual of arms in a competitive drill and were about returning to quarters. Carrying snake-headed batons, at the head of the column were the superior officers who acted as judges. Behind them came the two ensign bearers, one flaunting a triangular-shaped banner of embroidered satin, depicting a white heron on a rock. It was suspended from a gold bar, supported by a burnished bronze standard, finished with a cluster of brilliant-colored plumes.

The other emblem was a white satin square, showing a golden eagle with out-stretched wings ornamented with silver-set emeralds. The pole was gilded, and tufted at the top with curled white horsehair, out of which protruded a flaring crest of peacock feathers.

Back of each standard bearer marched the trumpeter and drummer of the regiment. A blast from the trumpet, and a movement of the banners guided the companies, while general orders were signaled by the gold-knobbed baton.

The modern drum-major is not the only man knowing how to twirl an ornamental baton, as he casts

side-long glances at his own moving shadow, nor is his high-stepping more admired to-day than it was of old. Vanity often changes the details, but seldom the actual methods of self-gratification.

The leaders wore quilted cotton tunics fitted closely to the body. Over this was a cuirass of thin gold and silver plates, in imitation of feathers. Leggins of ooze leather were attached to breech-clouts of dark blue cotton, while the feet were covered with sandals or bull's-hide moccasins ornamented with bead-work. Wound around the shoulders was a gayly striped mantle of fine wool, so light and soft in texture that in actual combat it served as a sash for the waist.

The helmets were of wood fiber, light but durable, from the crests of which floated a panache of feathers. The form of head covering, the color and arrangement of the plumes, indicated the family and rank of the wearer. Every warrior carried a shield, either of metal, or leather, or a light frame of reeds covered with quilted cotton.

A perfect sea of spears and darts tipped with transparent obsidian or fiery copper, sparkled in the noonday sun. The gay head coverings, the ribbons floating in the air, and the ornate shields wove in and out in serpentine undulations, finally disappearing in one of the Long Houses used for mess.

There was a clash and a rattle of arms as a company of expert archers of the White Heron drew bow and discharged three arrows at a time. But there was quite as much spirit and dash in the hurling of javelins by the men fighting under the eagle blazonry. To this weapon, thongs were attached, by means of which the knife was shot through the air

revolving so rapidly that it seemed like a ball of glittering steel. Presently, the blade returned and fell near the hand that gave it its forward impulse. Seldom, if ever, was there an accident in the performance of this extremely difficult feat, despite the anxiety and solicitude the undertaking always inspired.

On constant duty was a group of fighting men who served as lookouts at the various points of vantage in the tower. It was from this source that the men on parade learned that Akaza, the spiritual head, and Alcamayn, the representative of civil government, were inside the fortification. The intelligence was flashed from a set of mirrors and the impromptu display of prowess followed.

That there was keen rivalry in the competition, not unmixed with envy was shown very quickly, when a partisan of the White Heron, threw dirt into the face of an adherent of the Eagle Banner.

The parade ground was cleared at the time, but it was only a moment before a crowd collected around the angry disputants. They were dragged apart and hurried in opposite directions by friendly hands, whose good offices did not cease until the men were brought back and made to sing the national chant. First one man sang, then the other, while their auditors clapped their hands in accompaniment, and passed judgment on their efforts.

The insulted man took the initiative. While singing, he offered his hand to the offender. The face of the latter clouded, but the eyes of the camp were upon him. He sullenly took the outstretched hand, and finally the two voices blended in unison.

Their comrades swelled the chorus to a mighty shout and the whole difficulty was over.

This was in the Golden Age, in Pre-historic America, when the man who served was a great soul, and he who refused to resent an insult, the brave one.

Blood surged through the veins of Alcamayn, caused by accelerated heart-action as he kept a firm hold of Akaza's waist, to assist the hierophant in following the sinuosities of the winding stairway in the tower. Finally they stood alone on the roof, and as soon as the elder man's breathing became normal, he faced the east, and, with outstretched arms, cried:

"I adore Him who enables me to endure."

Alcamayn bowed his head, and, making the same genuflection, murmured:

"I give thanks to Him whose strength hath supported me thus far."

Slowly and impressively the twain faced the other cardinal points and repeated the same words. Then Alcamayn gave hand, and Akaza soon retraced his steps to where the mechanical apparatus for astronomical calculations and observations were in position. While thus occupied, Alcamayn surveyed the whole city, going from one lookout to another.

It was a perfect day, and his surroundings resembled an enormous ant-hill, with throngs of workers going in and coming out of the houses, or hastening along the thoroughfares. He turned to the bay, where a vision of surpassing beauty rewarded him.

Not a wisp of fleecy cloud dimmed the blue vault overhead; the only flecks of color being the pinks and lavenders blended into the sky-line above the horizon.

The soft, limpid atmosphere revealed the outlines of the shore indentations, whose lights and shadows added their quota to the indescribable charm. The water was smooth and clear as a sheet of crystal, with big and little crafts moving here and there instinct with life and industry.

Off what is now Black Point, Alcamayn saw a party of fishermen with their dogs and skiffs making for the shore. There were two groups of men and dogs already on the beach at stations about two hundred yards apart.

At a given signal the dogs started from their given points and swam straight out seaward, single file in two columns. At a sharp cry from one of the men on the beach, the right column wheeled to the left, and the left column wheeled to the right, until the head of each line met.

Then another signal was given, at which they all turned and swam abreast to the shore. As the dogs neared the beach, increasing numbers of fish appeared in the shallow water. When their feet touched bottom, the animals pounced upon their finny captives and carried them to their masters. Each dog was given the head of the fish he had secured, as his share of the catch. The dog who caught nothing received nothing.

For a long time Alcamayn was unable to distinguish any member of the party now coming city-ward, but he could see that it was of unusual importance. Soon he caught sight of Yermah seated in a palanquin, which was borne on the shoulders of four black men, and then he saw Oghi streaking along ahead of the pack of dogs which were in full cry at his heels. The ocelot often sprang to one side and played with

his canine pursuers, while anon he scaled a wall for their special delection. He was a magnificent swimmer, and a good fisher, despite the fact that he occasionally put his sharp teeth through the fish, rendering it unfit for other than his own use.

"It is near the third marking past meridian-time," said Akaza; "and when the circle is once more completed there will be but ten days remaining before we shall begin our mission of amity."

"Have fitting preparations been made?" asked Alcamayn.

"Hanabusa must take cognizance that a compliment of balsas do escort duty at commencement. A signal from Iaqua will apprise him."

"Yermah is but returning from a fishing expedition beachward. I have visioned him from an upper lookout."

"Then let him have speech with thee at once. Take freely the counsel he imparts, and let me have assurance of his assent when the windows of thy soul greet and speed our parting hence. Peace abide with thee."

He lightly kissed the forehead bared and inclined toward him.

Alcamayn paused a moment on the threshold and gazed lingeringly into a kindly countenance flushed by close mental application.

"May the preservative principle of the Trinity have thee entirely in its keeping," he responded, as he passed from view down the same spiral which had given him so much labor to ascend earlier in the day.

CHAPTER FOUR

DISPATCHING RUNNERS TO THE YO-SEMITE

THE Servitors of Tlamco were held strictly responsible for the conduct of their respective offices. Promotion and preference did not depend upon birth but on deeds.

"What has he done?" was the question propounded when a candidate presented himself for an office of public trust, and the same query met his lifeless body when it was offered for burial. Socially, and in the temples the same rule followed; so that distinctive service was the mainspring of their civilization.

Next to the priestly office, agriculture ranked highest in the choice of occupations. Men profoundly learned in every branch of it were continually in attendance at Iaqua. There were stations devoted to observation of climatic conditions; to the reclamation of wild fruits and cereals, or the propagation of new ones for food; to the surveying and proper distribution of lands; to the building of aqueducts, canals, bridges, granaries and public highways — to say nothing of the research in the extraction of dye stuffs from both vegetable and mineral substances.

Nearly all of the cereals and fruits known to man were reclaimed from a wild state by the contemporaneous inspiration of these times.

The surrounding country was divided into four sections or provinces, while the populace was grouped into tens, having an official who attended to minor details. Every thousand of the population had a magistrate. Each ten thousand, or fraction thereof, had a governor, who was one of the Counselors of State.

Orondo was at the head of the Civil Counselors, and it was to him, as first judge, that all questions of moment were submitted. Monthly reports were made to him by inspectors sent out for this purpose — men who served a lifetime without any other remuneration than the medals and prestige their positions insured. The priests owned nothing for themselves or their temples, nor did the advocates or healers receive recompense for service.

The community was superior to the individual, and the government provided for the needs of all its people. The land was divided into three parts; that belonging to the sun supported the priesthood, and built and maintained its temples.

Education was in the hands of the warrior-priests and the Virgins of the Sun; so the universities and schools drew their support from the same source. The next third belonged to the government and was cultivated for its benefit.

The unit of value was a day's labor, and all the taxes were paid in this way. When the people had planted the remaining third of the land for their own use, they worked alternately for the government (constructing public roads) and on the sun lands.

Hospitals for the aged, for orphans, and for the sick were a part of the government expense, institutions universally copied from, but seldom accredited

to the Aztecs and Peruvians by modern civilization.

No man was allowed to take advantage in a barter. Disputes arose every day among the guilds in the bazaars, but there was the same clannish feeling among them that has since made and maintained the family. Each trade was loyal to its own. They were ashamed to have a neighboring guild know that they quarreled, and it was a very aggravated case which invoked the law.

When planting-time came, Orondo turned the first furrow of sod, and the Virgins of the Sun dropped the seeds, while Akaza commended the undertaking to the four elements.

There were songs of rejoicing, and much exhibition of skill in cultivation, which at the close of the season, was rewarded by prizes and medals from Yermah's own hand. There were no idle men and women, and no paupers in these communities, while to be accused of laziness was a great disgrace.

The private houses in Tlamco were of sun-dried bricks, covered with stucco, elaborately ornamented and delicately tinted. They were seldom more than one story high, with ceilings of ornamental woods, while the walls were tinted or hung with simple cotton tapestries. The flat-roofs were often bright with potted plants, and these dwellings were invariably surrounded by flowers and a stretch of greensward.

The hospitals, the barracks, the Brotherhood houses and those occupied by the priestesses faced the cardinal points and were the squares within the circular streets. They were uniformly four stories high, with truncated sloping roofs, and terraced

grounds, forming ornamental bits of landscape among the trees, and commanding a fine view of bay and harbor.

Clusters of sunflowers grew here and there in out-of-the-way places. Free use was made of cherry, laurel, clove and lavender plants along the highways, because they were known to produce ozone; and the gardens contained their favorite flowers — narcissus, hyacinth and mignonette in abundance.

Orondo was giving an audience to the mathematicians who were employed in the Hall of Quippos, at Iaqua, where the government accounts were kept. And when it was known that Alcamayn had arrived Orondo sent and begged his presence. When the jeweler stepped into the hall, he found the place littered with quippos of all kinds. They were scattered about on chairs, on the tables, and some were hanging upon the walls, while clerks called the numbers and tallied the curiously knotted cords in a monotonous drone.

There were intricate estimates for the warriors shown by the red cords and fringes; yellow denoted the gold used in the mechanical arts and industries and in the temples; but these were few and simple in combination compared with the white ones, indicating the enormous amount of civil transactions for the current month.

Silver was used for state accounts, and its knots were curious little buttons, full of meaning for the men who mastered the art of the quippos. The largest bundle of all was the green, which, by its varying shades and fanciful combinations recorded the amount of wheat, corn and all agricultural produce owned or used by the pueblo city of Tlamco.

"One knot! Red signal corps," called the teller.

"Signal corps, ten," answered the tally.

"Two single knots, and one knot doubly intertwined, silver, Alcamayn."

"Two knots, twenty; one doubly intertwined, one hundred," repeated the tally.

"One knot, triply intertwined, yellow, Alcamayn."

"Hold!" cried Orondo. "Alcamayn, hast thou made requisition for a thousand grains of gold? Thy parchment is not properly stamped, and we cannot give thee so much treasure on irregular demand."

"Wilt thou grant me to see it?" said Alcamayn, reaching out for the document. "I must have both gold and silver quickly. There will scarce be time enough to prepare the gifts needed because of thy going to the Monbas."

"It grieves me that I cannot aid thee; but thou must have recourse to the Dorado."

"A foolish blunder leaves it without number, also," said Alcamayn, with a frown, handing the order to a tamane. "Yermah is engrossed with the priestesses caring for the fatherless. Dost thou know that he has issued an edict that all guilds and communes must sup together once in each lunation?"

"The Azes are grown lax in hospitality, and we must give them an example," responded Orondo.

The tamane returned with the parchment properly numbered and visèed.

"He whom we delight to serve bids thee follow me. He would fain have counsel with thee."

In obedience to the message, Orondo crossed the hall, and passed to the right, avoiding the audience chambers.

Yermah had risen and was dismissing the priest-

esses, after issuing orders on the state granaries for their requirements.

"Spare no efforts to make these flowers of humanity happy as birds of air," he said. "I charge thee to give them plenty of sweets, music and games for their amusement."

"Wilt thou not lend us thy presence?"

"Affairs of urgency prevent indulgence of personal desires, but I shall not forget to send best thoughts."

"May Jupiter the beneficent be in the ascendant throughout thy journey."

He made the sign of submission and bent the knee in courtly fashion.

"May his jovial and benign rays descend on all thy efforts. Success be with thee and thy wards," was Yermah's reply.

"The secret of happiness," said Setos, sententiously, "is in having constant employment for both body and mind. I shall advise —"

"What wilt thou advise, Setos?" asked Yermah, as he seated himself at the council table in his private office, where Alcamayn and Orondo had been waiting for him.

"Duty compels me to suggest severe measures for women neglecting their households and allowing their children to be seen in filthy rags. Near the Temple of Neptune I complain of three houses unlawfully dirty. It surprised me that Akaza made no mention of this in conference to-day."

"It were possible that he saw them not. He would be for mercy; and so am I."

Yermah was in a genial mood as his voice and manner indicated.

"What hast thou done with the offenders?" asked Orondo, quietly.

"The first family was warned; the second are now being paraded up and down the street. They have been admonished once before, and if it were in my discretion, they would be soundly whipped. Humiliation may serve with some natures, but corporal punishment is better for others."

"Thou sayest *they*. Whom dost thou mean?"

"The father and mother, and two young girls. The law is no respecter of persons."

"And, in addition, thou wouldst have me order them whipped?"

"N-o-o; I only wish thy consent to propose the measure at the next council meeting."

Yermah made a gesture of dissent, and asked pointedly:

"What punishment hast thou meted out to the third offense?"

"I have application here, awaiting thy signet, that I may take the children away from the shiftless sloven who gave them ingress to light."

"Is she widowed?"

"Yes; but she has been found guilty the third time."

"The application is denied for the present. Alcamayn will be guardian of streets in our absence. Upon returning, I shall lend mine ear to domestic affairs. Of late disturbances and complaints have been frequent from that quarter."

Touchy, vain-glorious Setos nettled at this.

"Do my fellows think me unmindful of duty?"

"No; only over-zealous. It is not in the province of good government to meddle with private affairs.

The best interests of posterity and the economic use of sustenance, with care of the person, are all that can be demanded."

"Akaza is competent to advise thee," interposed Orondo. "These matters properly come under his dominion."

"Akaza will undoubtedly agree with me," said Setos, catching at a straw for justification. "The first evidence of initiation is a sensitive condition of the organs of smell. The novitiate is required to discover the deadly effects of putrescent gases, and even children are taught that whatever offends the nostrils injures the body."

They rose simultaneously, and Orondo opened the door leading into the public reception hall.

"The runners are here, waiting to carry our greetings to the Monbas and their high priestess."

"Go and dispatch them, Orondo. I trust thee to lay the lash on them lightly. Go, thou, also, Setos, to see that they get the regulation stripes before setting forth."

The Dorado picked up the parchments signed and sealed earlier in the day, and locking them in a strong box of curious design, dismissed the two courtiers with a nod and a smile.

"I pray thee return quickly. Alcamayn needs advice from thee respecting thy special departments of service."

CHAPTER FIVE

THE TEMPLE OF LOVE IN THE LAND OF FIRE

THE watchers on the top of Mount Diablo looked anxiously for sunrise the morning Yermah and his followers rowed slowly across San Francisco Bay, hugging the shorelines until the mouth of the Sacramento River was reached.

Four times in the year the early visitor to Mount Diablo sees the "Shadow of the Devil" cast a triangular outline against its grizzled peak. The contacts last but a second and fade like a breath of mist from a looking-glass.

All of the cluster of piny hills which surrounds Diablo like brilliants around a stone of the first water are still in darkness, and the two large valleys at either side seem an indistinct blur, when the heavy, phantom-like shadow is thrown on the scene, slantingly, clear, and sudden.

On the right side of the mountain, the light nearest the black line that accentuates the shadow is palest yellow, shading gradually into green, until it is lost in the yellow-brown of the hills. To the left the line is reddish, and the shadow blue-black.

That the triangle shaped itself perfectly, and gave good omen of the enterprise in hand, was evident from the excitement among the men whose duty it was to signal the good news to the Observatory

tower in Tlamco, and also to the fleet in the bay and river.

Without mishap or deterrent incident the expedition found its way up the river past the bog-rushes, or tules, which gossip among themselves throughout the year. Occasionally the cry of a lone bittern or loon warned the invaders of a priority of claim upon the sustenance hidden by the murky waters or along the grassy banks.

The wild things were startled and much distressed by such unaccustomed tumult, but their feeble protests failed to disturb the serenity of the human contingent secure in a might-made right to be the over-lords of all less gifted creatures. When they arrived at the point which is now occupied by the city of Stockton, the entire party disembarked, and, taking to the saddle, pushed on with as little delay as possible.

Who can describe springtime in California? From Yuma to the Klamath what waving of leafy banners, what marvelous music of bird-song, what conquest of grass-blades, what routing of first usurpers!

Mystical California! Where the Ice Age never came, and where the magnetism of pre-historic times still lingers to attract race skandhas which shall begin the upward spiral of a new sub-race great in psychological possibilities!

The days of peonage have passed forever. The cavaliers and the padres were oppressed by the Aztec; he, in turn, suffered at the hands of the Argonaut.

Over the surface of placer and quartz mines, vines, fig-trees and olives hide the scars made by

sturdy miners, and dispute prestige with the golden grains which have been the staff of life to many alien born, and the end is not yet.

The California of Cabrillo's day was a continuous flower-garden from north to south. It must have been fair to view before mission sheep and horses tramped down the hills, where once only the grizzly bear and deer roamed unafraid long after the memory of Atlantis itself had been lost in accumulating centuries.

The early mariners of our dispensation called the southern hills the "Land of Fire," because of the blaze at poppy-time — the copo del oro of the padre and cavalier, the Yankee gold-cup, the Russian eschscholtzia. Then as now the yellow lupines, loved by the rag-tag-and-bobtail of the insect world, flourished beside the blue and purple blossoms of more pretentious claims, flirting with daintier bees and butterflies.

The mints are a family of pedigree, and with all their kith and kindred they camped in clans about field and wood. Sage, thyme, and savory have always been well spoken of for yeoman service, while rosemary and lavender are beloved of the poets.

California has both white and purple sweet wild mint, and her sage-bushes yield to the bees honey next to that made from clover for richness and whiteness. Everywhere on the trail Yermah's companions found the Yerba Buena, which name in later years was applied to their beloved Tlamco.

There were no quartz or gravel mines in those days. The battea of the Mexican and the horn-spoon of the "forty-niner" had no place in the pack-train — for the auriferous gravel had not been

thrown to the surface in great ridges, and the blue veins which are the natural beds for gold were in some instances thousands of feet below the surface.

The combined action of air, water, sunshine, frost and earthquake were yet to disintegrate the matrix of quartz and set the precious metals free, or else to ingulf them in tons of molten lava after vaporizing them in the bowels of the earth.

Time has wrought many of these changes since, and the heavy rains have washed the light silica into the water courses, and thence to the valleys, thus forming the soil and gravel which has yielded gold in this sun-down land.

It was here that the early prospector found his reward, and it is here also that the battle over the disposal of the débris left by hydraulic process has been fought out by miner and husbandman.

Then the cactus family, those outcasts of the desert which are said to have survived the last glacial period, flourished in all their quaint ugliness. By long centuries of adaptation of scanty means to the ends of growth, the cactus has discarded its leaves and developed a fleshy stem, cylindrical, rectangular, triangular, flat, or round, but always armed with long needles. As a compensation, it bears exquisite blossoms of dainty tissue pistils and yellow ravelings of stamens, while its fruits might have been the golden apples of Hesperides.

Akaza directed his party to take a trail leading to the south side of the Merced River, nearly two thousand feet lower than the route followed by tourists of later times. Suddenly from out one of the gray-green clusters of cacti darted a coarse-plumaged bird, marked with brown and white specks

on the upper part, while the lower portion of its body was a dingy white.

Oghi gave chase immediately, but it distanced him, with insolent flinging of sand and dust which quite surprised this intrepid hunter. He did not know whether to be frightened or ashamed of himself. At an encouraging word from Yermah, he laid his ears back close to his head and again tried the chase. The bird manifested no disposition to fly or to leave the trail.

The trumpeter blared a command to halt, and the entire expedition came to a standstill.

"Dismount for refreshment and rest, first giving attention to the horses," was the word passed along the line.

Soon the tamanes were bustling about and making necessary arrangements for Yermah's comfort, while he and Akaza were intent upon examining the covert from which the road-runner started. A shout brought Setos and Orondo to his side, and after them, one by one, the whole party.

"I am of opinion," said Setos, "that this strange bird, or beast, intended to eat the rattlesnake it had killed."

"Not so," returned Akaza. "The body has been pecked full of holes and the bird was evidently about to abandon it when disturbed by Oghi."

"See how well the creature has outlined a circle in laying these pieces of cactus leaves around the snake," remarked Orondo, intently examining the crude architectural plan.

"Dost thou know anything about its habits?" inquired Yermah, turning to one of the piloting tamanes.

"Yes, my master. This bird is the natural enemy of rattlesnakes. It remains concealed until the reptile is fast asleep in the warm sand. With its sharp bill it is easy to take off part of a cactus leaf, as thou seest. Instinct teaches how to place them in a circle. This done, it throws caution to the wind and rouses the snake. Then there is a battle royal. The snake can not crawl over the cactus needles and finally dies of its own bite."

"Does the bird eat any portion of its victim?" asked Setos.

"Nothing except the eyes. The remainder of the body is scattered about in the sand, as thou seest."

"Oghi will bring him back captive, but, I fear me, badly mutilated."

"The ocelot will never catch him. These birds outfoot a thoroughbred. They are quicker, shyer, more alert even than Oghi. Besides, the smell of them is quite enough for a fastidious animal."

It was long after, and when the column was once more on the move, that Oghi came back — with his tongue hanging out; his tail between his legs; evidently disgusted and thoroughly fagged.

Arriving at what is now called Cold Springs, the party began the ascent of the Chowchilla Mountains. Trees begin here — Sequoia gigantea,— of world-wide fame, but their habits were not new to the men of this expedition.

Long before there were written words to express the ideas of man, the forest has furnished symbols of the various stages of human existence. The pliancy of youth, the exuberant strength of maturity,

the decay of age, have suggested eloquent parallels between man and the tree.

In contemplating the monarchs of the woods the greatest poets and the denizens of the untracked forests have risen together to the same heights of imagery and the same tokens of emotion and sentiment.

Who can resist the silence, the whispering, the soughing, the writhing, the twisting and groaning of a pine tree, from the first flicker of a needle until the whole growth is in a Titanic struggle with the vagrant wind. The onset tests the strength of root, bole, branch and tendril to their utmost, then suddenly departs, leaving each needle erect and still as if listening to the music of the stars.

In all ages, and among all people, certain groves have been held sacred. The tree-alphabet of the Chinese, the curling roofs of the truncated pagodas, the numerous legends of the tree and vine, symbolizing life, are universal testimonials of this ancient veneration.

The trees giving shelter to Yermah defied the Ice Age and escaped destruction in the flood. There are giants in Mariposa Grove to-day contemporaneous with the Star of Bethlehem and the departing grandeur of Egypt. The green spires of this living forest, three hundred feet high, filter the air through innumerable branches, making one shiver at their mysterious whistle, like the rustling silk robes of an unseen company.

The mystic and appalling are there as well. How often in active life the specter stands among men and trees!

The very strength gained by such close lifting of

fibers during decades of existence will not permit these giants to seek rest prone upon the welcoming breast of Mother Earth. Still must they stand, bleached by sun, beaten by rain, and buffeted by winds, leading a spectral existence when remains of other members of the forest have silently sunk to rest, and are no longer distinguishable in substance from the very soil from which they sprung.

For a century or so there is a struggle among the children of the fallen monarch. At last but few remain, to become giants in their turn — set on the rim of the pit formed by the decaying roots of their ancient ancestor. Rings of this kind can still be found, showing the broken roots projecting like the staves of a barrel, overgrown with ferns and wild oxalis, or filled to the brim with fresh spicy redwood sprouts.

No one who visits the Yo-Semite to-day, can imagine the abundance in early times of wild flowers and luxuriant grasses reaching up to the saddle-girths, or the almost total absence of undergrowth and brush in the groves, thus affording clear, open views from either side. The valley lies nearly in the center of the State, north and south, midway between the east and west bases of the Sierras.

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Not a sound broke the impressive stillness as Yermah caught his first grand view from Inspiration Point, save occasional chirps and songs of birds, or the low, distant sigh of waterfalls in the vertical-walled chasm below. Here and there was a dark yellow pine rooted in the crevice, and clinging tenaciously to its dizzy elevation. The wind swept

these trees to and fro, and there was a faint, plaintive murmur in their leaves as of pain.

Yermah did not notice that coveys of grouse beat the air with their wings in clumsy and obstinate flight, nor did he see that deer sprang up here and there, making for the undergrowth, lying in an opposite direction. He reined his horse sharply out of the green forest and stood upon a high jutting rock overlooking a rolling, uplifting sea of granite mountains of a beautiful pearl-gray. The colors were cold in effect — all the character being given by the vertical parallel lines of gray, brown, and black which stripe a portion of the walls.

The sun winked at them from behind the pine-trees on the top of the hills, and threw shimmering lances among the cliffs and crags, burnishing up their edges. Its rosy tints etched furrows on the mountain's face, seeming to take pride in bringing out strongly the wrinkles which the master of the hour-glass and scythe had been busily engaged upon for so many thousand years.[1]

The first impressive thought was that the granite ledges were standing pale and dumb before their Creator! The towers, the domes, the spires, the battlements, the arches, the white columns of solid granite surging up into the air came to everlasting anchor! The silence seemed to quiver with sound, just as the warm air shimmered without stir all along the rocky outlines. The scene conveys to the soul of man through the eye what might the orchestra of heaven through the ear, were peals of thunder compassed into harmonious notes of music. As the king of day rode farther out, he gently touched the

[1] J. M. Hutchings in "The High Sierras."

falls of Upper Yo-Semite, transforming a downpour of crystals into tears of liquid silver, which the winds whirled into fantastic wraiths against the frowning cliffs.

All that was mortal in the visitor swept back; all that was immortal surged to the front, and bowed down in awe.

"Here speaks the voice of God; and here His power is manifest."

It was Akaza's voice that broke the silence.

"Hail! smiling morn that tips these hilltops with alchemic gold! Teach us the secret of thy magic."

Again it was Akaza's words.

"Here we have visual evidence of the power and glory of the Supreme Ruler. The majesty of His handiwork is in that testimony of rocks."

A softening haze hung over the valley, and the clouds partly dimmed the higher cliffs and mountains. Obscurity of vision increased the reverential mood of the party. A peculiarly exalted sensation seemed to fill their minds, and their eyes swam with fellowly drops of emotion, though their tongues refused their office. By common impulse they pushed forward, and coming down back of Cathedral Rocks, found themselves at nightfall near the valley's mouth, with El Capitan on the left and Bridal Veil Falls on the right.

On the plains of the San Joaquin, sixty miles below, El Capitan had been first sighted, and now they gazed curiously at its bare, smooth sides, entirely destitute of vegetation, towering above their heads fully three thousand feet — a solid mass of granite, set squarely out into the valley, as if meaning to bar their passage.

Here they were met by a delegation of Monbas accompanied by their own runners. After listening to an address of welcome, they were invited to meet the high-priestess, Kerœcia, at Mirror Lake, higher up the valley.

"This glorious sun gives light to the ceremony of purification by fire, demanding the presence of all our people, else had they been here to give welcome to our friends. We are bidden to serve thee in the name of the high-priestess, and make familiar the grandeur of this noble temple," said Ben Hu Barabe, the Civil Chief.

"Accept our humble thanks and faithful obedience," responded Yermah.

"May the warmth and light flooding us genially be an augury of felicitous days to come," said Orondo.

"May our inmost thoughts be in harmony with Divine Will," added Akaza, while Setos called attention to a chucah, a curious basket-like structure, suspended from a tree near where he stood. Upon examination, it was found to contain a parchment scroll filled with a detailed report of the runners' journey and reception.

"The Monbas will remain only long enough to ascertain and comply with the wishes of the Azes, after the ceremonies now in progress cease," continued Ben Hu Barabe. "The emissary, Eko Tanga, comes on mischief bent, and we must be ready to meet him."

The determined tone and angry scowl indicated the sentiments of the speaker.

"When once outside these sacred precincts, we

have matters of moment to discuss with thy leaders," said Yermah.

"We are pledged to the leadership of the high-priestess, and humbly await her pleasure. She will hear thee fully," was the response made by the young warrior.

There was something in his loyal speech which impressed Yermah greatly. He looked at him with an eye of favor, and asked him to show the way up the valley.

Rahula and Ildiko, refreshed by a night's rest, accompanied by Orondo and Setos, recrossed the valley to view Bridal Veil Falls. The women were in raptures at the sight of the great falls, and insisted that their palanquins should be lowered frequently, to enable them to examine the graceful undulating sheets of spray. It fell in gauze-like folds, expanding, contracting and glittering in the sunlight like a veil of diamonds. Then changing into one vast and many-colored cloud, it threw its mystic drapery over the falling torrent, as if to shroud its unspeakable beauty.

Down the water leaps in one unbroken chain to an immense bowlder-formed cauldron below, where it boils and surges furiously, throwing up volumes of spray, while the sun haloes the abyss with two or more gorgeous rainbows. The swaying from side to side under the varying pressure of the wind, and the jarring roar of the water, thrilled and hushed the beholders into silent, spellbound admiration.

Yermah followed the north wall on past the Three Brothers which rise in steps, one behind the other, with their heads turned in the same direction.

The lofty columnar rock called Washintgon Tower has diamond-like cascades, which tumble down the sides of the Royal Arches more than two thousand feet. These wing-like spans form a sort of lion's head, not unlike the winged lions of Nineveh.

With the column which forms an angle to Teneya Cañon, they seem intended for a base of adequate magnitude to support the North Dome.

The mighty powers of Nature, which have wrought such wonders in this region, cleft this tower in twain, and disposed of the fragments in a manner as mysterious as it must have been awful.

On the opposite side of Teneya Cañon is Half Dome — a perfectly inaccessible crest. From a distance one might fancy that the stone-cutter's art had been brought to bear upon its perfectly rounded summit. Upon closer inspection it is found that Time has been the sculptor. The ages have cut out huge concentric layers of granite, and scattered them about in picturesque confusion.

Yermah rode on up the cañon until his ears caught the notes of a folk-song; then he dismounted and, fastening Cibolo to a live-oak, made his way toward the music. Astonishment and delight transfixed his gaze.

At his feet lay the "Sleeping Waters,"[1] embowered by trees, and environed on high by the dome already described. This water course leaps from crag to pool, until it reaches equilibrium, and the surface of the lake is as motionless and smooth as a mirror. The reflected domes, peaks and trees are seen on its glassy bosom in perfect outline, seemingly

[1] Indian name for Mirror Lake.

five hundred fathoms down, in exact representation of the beauties that reach one mile into the air!

Yermah stood spellbound, not so much by this stupendous grandeur as by the scene being enacted before him. He was so intently regarding it that he scarcely saw or felt the shower of flint-headed arrows which fell in profusion and ruffled the surface of the lake.

His eyes were riveted on a young woman who was in the act of speeding a golden arrow over the heads of three other girls of nearly her own age, and who were putting off from shore in a crescent-shaped boat, which they propelled with long silvery oars. They were chanting softly, and the air was redolent with the perfume of flowers, which completely filled the boat, hanging in graceful profusion from prow and stern, in wreaths of all sizes and colors.

The boat moved like a thing instinct with life, and as it disappeared on the opposite side, Yermah's tense gaze made itself felt on its object. Kerœcia moved uneasily, and then looked fixedly into the water stretched out before her. She first saw her own image, then beside it the ideal of her dreams — a helmeted figure, reflected full-length in the limpid stream.

His tunic was of purple cloth, confined at the waist by a wide striped silk sash, which tied over the left hip and hung in long, heavy, fringed ends. The short, full skirt was of orange silk, with a wide band of embroidery around the bottom, and underneath were long, closely-woven woolen leggins of purple. The feet were protected by sandals with jeweled sides and straps across the instep. From his

shoulders hung a leopard-skin cloak, double-faced, so that it was alike on both sides.

He wore a square breastplate of stones, containing twelve jewels, proclaiming that he was Master of the twelve councilmen, and ruled continuously while the sun traveled through the twelve signs of the zodiac. At his side hung a burnished bronze sword, with a beautifully engraved scabbard, delineating a lion hunt from meet to finish.

At first Kerœcia was fascinated, then a feeling of fear stole over her. She made a movement as if to fly, but in turning stood face to face with Yermah. An inarticulate sound died on her lips as she started back amazed and fearful. Her wide-eyed vision and strained attention searched the countenance of the pale and agitated man, who stood so near her that she felt the radiating warmth of his body. He remained motionless, but she shrank back, and was momentarily rooted to the spot.

With a regal sweep of the arm, he bared his head, and with his right hand made the hierophant sign of command. He opened the hand, palm outward, the first two fingers pointing upward. He bowed profoundly, and carried the helmet hand to his heart lightly.

Kerœcia quickly comprehending his intent as well as his rank and station, courteously made the Atlantian sign of submission.

Yermah recognized it by a downward movement of his open right hand.

"Pleasing in my sight, and welcome to all the Monbas, is the Servitor of Aztlan," she said. "He who created the four elements forbid that fatigue or discomfort should be thy portion."

"It were an earthy spirit which could be mindful of the physical in this magnificent temple," replied Yermah.

His calm, even tones quieted and reassured her completely.

"Have none of my fellows shown thee courtesy? Thy exalted station and goodness of heart demand much."

"Ample consideration met us at the newel-post of this wondrous structure. It were a puny effort indeed that would fail to convey such welcome as the season and occasion warrant. In harmony with this spirit, I have stolen away from my companions and have sought audience direct with thee. If ill-considered abruptness gives rise to inharmonious thought, forgive me. The head, and not the heart, is at fault."

"Offense were not possible with this intent. And I were an unworthy handmaiden should I harbor ill will on this day, holiest of all the year to the Monbas."

"I stand athirst for knowledge of the sacred rite already partially witnessed. Is it lawful for an alien to know its import?"

"We who find divinity in the flowers, the birds, the sunshine, the trees, the rocks, the streams, and the hills, have no secrets apart from any living thing. But before thy special question, tell me of thy comrades. Shall I face them here?"

"In this place, and soon. They skirted the southern wall. The women came in chairs, lest fatigue should render them unfit to give heed to thy many accomplishments. Tell me the office of the three graces in the flower-laden boat."

"All the ills of my people are consigned to those flowers. The ark in the center contains a symbol of the all-pervading essence of creation, and when the sun comes high enough to send a vertical ray into this ark, the flowers which have been collected for the past three days will be sacrificed by fire; and then we can go hence happy and content, free from evil tendency within and without. Our faith is simple. We try to live in harmony with the laws of Life and Love."

"An artist who revels in the beauties of creation receives direct the thoughts of the Eternal Father," returned Yermah, reverently.

"A child inhaling the fragrance of a flower receives in the process of transmutation the thoughts of the Creator."

"Without the intervention of planetary influence?"

"The open flower, with its sun-rayed form, is to vegetation what the sun is to the planets, and as man is to animal life. Flowers crown Nature's dominions."

"The soul of man crowns all animate things," persisted Yermah.

"When he crushes a beetle he destroys the life of what may some day be his brother," she answered, with a smile.

"Dost thou believe in transmigration? I am agreed with thee that life is a vibration of Divine Will, moving in a spiral, but physical man is the lowest rung contacted by the ego."

"Oh, say not so! Is not the ego a ray of the creative energy itself? Thinkest thou the human

family the only emanation of Divinity worthy to contact its Creator?"

"Yes," he answered; "and only then by aspiring to a spiritual plane."

"How many planes dost thou allot to man?"

"Three — the physical, the mental and the spiritual. A novice must perform the nine labors in order to achieve perfection. Each plane is threefold, like the alchemical sun, whose prototype blesses us with its preserving rays. Unfold to me the principles of thy system."

"The first degree is that of the crystallized mineral, typifying death. The rocks and stones are of both sexes. Their sympathies and antipathies constitute their laws of natural selection determined by the vegetation produced from their soil. The second degree pertains to the subjective spaces of the mineral world — the tiny races within the higher round of that zone. Each life-atom is busy at its own appointed task, happy beyond conception in its lowly spiritual state. The third degree is the vegetable kingdom. The leaves are so placed that a line wound around the stem of a plant, and touching the petiole of each leaf would be a spiral. Where the leaves are in two rows, it is one-third the circumference, and so on in successive trines."

"No one could be more loyal than I to the great family of endogens," said Yermah. "They all go by threes, and are correlated to the Trinity. We make the lily the type of purity; the palm, the type of perfect life, which is service. The grains give the staff of life; the grasses cover the earth, and feed our animals. The onion not only contains the im-

mortal elixir, but in its circles represents the growth of the universe, and the orbits of the planetary system."

"The exogens," said Kerœcia, "are closer to our own lives. The rose gains in beauty as it loses its power of reproduction, and the flower which carpets our hillsides with patches of gold drops the calyx when it arrives at perfection. It lives with the sun — opening and closing with his coming and going, and is so delicate that we make it the symbol of the soul.

"In the fourth degree are the flower nymphs, disporting themselves like butterflies in the luminous ether of their round. Some bear resemblance to beautiful girls, but are bright green, with large heads and small bodies. In the full scale they show all the colors of the rainbow. The fifth degree is the animal kingdom; the sixth is semi-human; the seventh is man. Love is the only condition of creation — that love which is perfect equilibrium between thyself and the universe."

Neither spoke for several moments; then Yermah said, with a sigh of contentment: "This is a veritable Temple of Love."

"In very truth it is," she returned; "and this is the season of renewal. It is the breeding-time of flowers and of the feathered tribes. Look here!"

She drew back a branch of eglantine, heavy with bloom, and nestled cozily in the fork of the parent stem was a tiny grayish-white mass of hair, fashioned into a nest by a gold-throated humming-bird. The mate industriously sipped honey from blossom to blossom, while the watcher on the nest put up its long, tube-like bill, waiting to be fed.

The birds twittered conjugal confidences unmindful of prying eyes. Disturbed at last by the voices, both balanced in air, leaving exposed to view two little spotted eggs, not larger than fine shot. They darted about in evident distress, keeping up a constant humming with their gauzy wings.

The man and woman paused but a second, and then passed on.

The Monbas believed in five sub-human kingdoms, peopled by entities. The mineral kingdom was represented by gnomes; the vegetable kingdom, by sylphs; the reptile, by fire or salamanders; water, by undines and fishes. Kerœcia's followers were the forerunners of the ancient Druids and the modern gypsies.

The aim of all religions is to harmonize man with the laws which govern the universe. The Monbas did this by metempsychosis of the sub-human elements. They solved the great problem of absorbing into the astral system the pure psychic elements about them, and reached divinity by this process. It is for this reason that the gypsies never mingle with other civilizations. They go to nature direct for their wisdom, and keep away from cities for fear of losing their psychic powers.

On Good Friday, the gypsies still have their patriarch carry an ark or basket, in the bottom of which has been placed a Saint Andrews cross. Each member of the tribe lays a flower on the cross to abjure and protect him against evil influences — thus perpetuating the idea of the immaculate conception. The gypsies believe that the flowers give off metempsychosis and absorb disease.

Orondo, Setos, Rahula and Ildiko with a retinue

of tamanes, a Monbas escort, and some burros laden with stout willow baskets and bags, skirted the southern side of the valley in passing Cathedral Rock and Spires.

There were splendid pitch-pine trees massed in the foreground, which being duplicated on the top of the cliffs, looked like a mere fringe of green thrown into relief against fleecy white clouds hurrying across the turquoise sky in pursuit of some fleeting phantom of that eerie region.

The travelers found it warm work to cross the Merced River, near by; but the cool sea-breezes began to blow up from the Golden Gate — for they were almost opposite, in a direct line from Tlamco. In pushing on to Mirror Lake, they followed the same path taken by Yermah. As they passed Indian Cañon, they looked up the deep gorge to the eastward and saw that here was the entrance and exit used by the Monbas.

As they neared the lake, they looked off in the distance to where Cloud's Rest connects with the High Sierra this chain of matchless pearls from the mouth of Nature. Around the top of this extremely elevated, steep, barren ridge hover continuously a bevy of cottony clouds, while a lace-like scarf of fog softens the hard, unyielding lines, and makes them tempt the soul of man to feats of the greatest daring.

Presently was seen a thin, vapory line of smoke issuing from the direction in which the boat had disappeared. Instantly the roads seemed alive with people, coming from all directions, and making the welkin ring with melodious sound. There were men, women and children, gay in holiday attire, singing

and gesticulating in the very ecstasy of joy. They crowded the banks of the lake and waited expectantly.

At length a slender silver arrow flew up from the smoke clouds; then, another; and again, a third. This was followed by a deafening blast of trumpets, drums, cymbals, tambourines, pipes, and ear-splitting whistles, as the priestesses re-embarked and slowly approached. The first splash of the silvery oars was answered by a shout of triumph from the opposite shore, followed by a song, in which three voices joined with equal zest.

Then the crowd fell back, making room for Kerœcia and the tall, fair stranger. He was intent and alert; she, smilingly gracious. As the boat anchored, she raised her hand in blessing, for which Yermah reverently uncovered.

The priestess stepped forward to receive an urn delicate and fragile as the ashes of roses it contained, when a treacherous pebble turned her ankle, and she would have fallen had not Yermah caught her by the arm in time to prevent a painful strain upon the supporting muscles and tendons. It was the unstudied act of a man of ready tact and faultless breeding.

The hillsides and rock walls rumbled and echoed the burst of cheering which greeted this feat. Again he uncovered and stood in a respectful attitude until the three nimble-footed young women were on shore. They, catching the infection, shared in the general excitement. By a common impulse they arranged themselves in line, and stood with Yermah and Kerœcia, bowing acknowledgments and participating in dumb show with the spontaneous outpouring of good will.

"Alcyesta, Suravia, Mineola, accept the homage offered by Yermah, the Dorado, of Aztlan, lately arrived from Tlamco," said Kerœcia. "These are my trusted hand-maidens. Receive service from them as from mine own hands."

"Such grace and fair fellowship bankrupts the offices of speech. Alone, I am powerless to make adequate return; but here I have allies who will amply requite thee," saying which he turned to make room for his companions, who had approached in the general confusion unobserved by the company. Setos and Orondo uncovered and waited back of their countrymen.

The gnomes, salamanders, sylphs, and undines of fairyland, peeping out from each leaf and fragrant bloom, never beheld a lovelier vision than that of Kerœcia and Ildiko, as they stood facing each other.

Kerœcia's long, wavy bronze-red hair was confined by a jeweled band, with three white ostrich tips in the center. She was gowned in simple white, long and flowing. Around her neck were seven strands of pearls fastened to a medallion composed of ruby, topaz, emerald, sapphire, amber, amethyst and turquoise. Encircling her slender waist was an enameled and jeweled girdle. The loose sleeves fell back from exquisitely shaped arms, ornamented with bracelets, while numerous rings adorned her taper fingers.

In her big Oriental eyes, shaded with long lashes, was a glint of the bronze which the sun brought out in her hair. A ripened peach is the only fitting comparison for her cheeks, and her tiny, even teeth glistened white between the perfectly formed and curved lips which in parting revealed them.

Ildiko, taller, and more slight, was a sharp contrast, her fuzzy white hair, eye-brows, and lashes contrasting with her shell-pink skin. The pale blue of her dress strengthened the color of her eyes, which were so well set back that a full interpretation of their language baffled the observer. There were embroideries and jeweled passementeries, the rich arrangement of which showed the detail of her toilet. A gauze head-dress supporting a thin veil, which fell well down over her back, helped the illusion. She skillfully tried to get full benefit of the roseate rays reflected by an umbrella held over her head by an attendant.

Yermah took her hand and placed it in Kerœcia's outstretched palm, and then put both his own over them protectingly.

"May such love as sisters bear each other bind thee."

Then bringing Rahula forward, he presented her. A dark-red head-band, glistening with jetted embroidery and drooping ear ornaments enhanced the luster of her iron-gray hair, and somewhat softened the expression of her wrinkled face. Not a facet of the jet sparkled brighter than her beady, black eyes, which were never quite in accord with her thin smiling lips.

Simple gold bands without ornament confined the locks of Alcyesta, Suravia, and Mineola, that of the first and last being dark and abundant, while Suravia's hair was like spun gold in texture and color. These bands did not go all the way around the head, but terminated over each ear in medallions, jeweled and enameled in quaint design. Alcyesta wore pale yellow; Suravia, lavender; and Mineola, pink. A

bright plaid sash was tied about each waist, and fell to the hem in the back. Sandals with pointed toes, reaching well over the instep, protected the feet.

The other women wore dresses of cotton cloth made like chemises. These were of four colors, and worn one over the other. The edges were variously ornamented, some with figures, others again with embroidery or saw-teeth appliqués of a different shade. Necklaces of beads, jeweled belts, earrings, bracelets and sandals were common to them all. Some wore crowns or other fanciful head-covering with bright feather ornaments, while others braided their hair in two loose plaits, and covered their heads with an indescribably fine-woven basket, highly ornate, which came to a point at the top.

The Highlander of to-day would appreciate and admire the markings of the cloth worn by these sturdy mountaineers. For the leaders, there were plaids of seven colors; for the next in rank, five colors; for governors of fortresses, four colors; for captains, three colors; for warriors, two colors; for the common people, one color.

The warriors carried shields of flexible bamboo canes bound firmly together, and covered with rawhide. These were ornamented with porcupine quills, tortoise-shell, mother-of-pearl, and ivory, inlaid and skillfully etched with mineral dyes, the rank of the wearer being cleverly revealed in this manner. The shields were invariably circular and convex in form. Worn next to the body, were plain white garments of coarse texture, and on their heads were high conical hats, very like the Astrakhan caps of to-day. Leggins much wrinkled and heavy sole-leather sandals completed their costume.

In the solemn hush, four stalwart warriors of the Monbas stepped forward and knelt upon the shore, grasping each other by the inner fore-arm, near the elbow. Kerœcia and the three priestesses carefully lifted the ark from the boat and placed it in the receptacle made by the inter-locked arms.

Taking a few of the ashes left in the urn, Kerœcia mixed them with salt, which she stirred with an aspergillus made of medical herbs tied to a hazel stick on which the four spirits were carved. The salt and incense ashes were consecrated separately before using. She then took the four alchemical elements, salt, mercury, sulphur and nitrogen, and sprinkled them over the man holding a chalice representing water; an eagle, with a nimbus around its head representing air; a tree of life, representing fire; and the sword of Mithra, who annually immolates the sacred bull. These correspond to mind, matter, motion and rest.

The special kingdom of the gnomes is in the north; that of the salamanders, in the south; that of the sylphs, in the east; and that of the undines, in the west. They influence the four temperaments of man. The gnomes, the melancholic; the salamanders, the sanguine; the undines, the phlegmatic; the sylphs, the bilious. The Monbas abjured them by breathing, sprinkling, burning of perfumes, and by tracing a pentagram on the ground.

Kerœcia holding a pentacle in one hand, and taking in turn a sword, a rod, and a cup, faced the lake and said:

"Angel with the blind eyes, obey me, or pass away from the holy water! Work, wingèd bull, or return to earth, if thou wouldst not be pricked by this

sword! Fettered eagle, obey this sign, or retire before my wrath! Writhing serpent, crawl at my feet, or be tortured by the sacred fire, and evaporate with the perfumes I am burning! Water, return to water; fire, burn; air, circulate; earth, return to earth — by the power of the pentagram, which is the morning star, and in the name of the tetragram, which is written in the center of the cross of light. Auma!"

In the Egyptian and Jewish religions, three vestal virgins guard the ark, typical of the Immaculate conception — in that the ark contains an aerolite, or Heaven-born stone. In Greek mythology, the three graces guard the sacred urn. The name Suravia signified the sun-way, or river of light; Alcyesta, the ark, chest, or urn floating on the celestial river; while Mineola, personated the divine soul-mind liberated in the ark.

The flint-headed arrow is a phallic symbol of thought, and when the Monbas shot arrows over water it was to destroy their unseen enemies; the lake, to them, representing mind. The passage of the sun out of the watery sign in the Spring equinox was the festival Kerœcia and her people were celebrating.

CHAPTER SIX

THE AGREEMENT TO ARBITRATE THEIR SEVERAL DIFFERENCES

IT was Jupiter's Day (Thursday), and Akaza wore a scarlet robe of silk, with embroidered bands, having the twelve signs of the zodiac worked out in neutral tones of brown and green. On his head was a scarlet liberty-cap with the sign of Jupiter on the forehead and his long hair and beard had been curled into nine parts, typical of the nine phases of initiation which he had passed. He wore a sapphire ring on the middle finger of his right hand, and his breastplate was of emeralds, set in silver.

With a single tamane and a guide, Akaza followed the course of the Merced River and reveled in the luxuriant vegetation which changes in character and development according to locality.

Near the falls were dense growths of alder, willow and spruce, and in the upper valley were sugar-pine and yellow and bastard cedar in abundance.

The Balm of Gilead, poplar and black oak haunted the swampy places where snowy pond-lilies rode in imperious fashion over the moisture. There was a wilderness of sparkling mosses thriving in the spray of waterfall and cascade.

Back in cool, shady greeneries, were an infinite variety of ferns, ranging from tall bracken to feathery

maidenhair clinging to the eerie crevices high up on the sky line.

Maple, laurel, and manzanita with dainty bell-shaped blossoms colored like a baby's palm, had as companion another member of the buck-thorn family, the white lilac. And these seemed intent upon concealing the basis of the different falls. Here, also, was the madroño, "the harlequin of the woods," in buff and red bark, in a chronic state of dishabille. But who would find fault with the toilet process which changes the older, darker bark for the delicate cream-colored covering which lies underneath?

A noisy, chattering bluejay, the scandal-monger of the bird family, protested vigorously against the incursion of this venerable old man. Vociferous and argumentative, the feathered opponent grew tired of useless opposition, and, as a practical joke, concealed itself in the clump of leaves and screamed like a hawk near where a flock of small birds were enjoying themselves in their own fashion.

The songsters recovered from their fright while the rascal was giving vent to a cackle which sounded like a derisive laugh, and then they combined forces to drive the intruder out of the neighborhood. The bluejay proved to be as full of fight as of mischief, but a severe conflict produced an appreciable amendment of manners.

Even the red-headed wood-pecker ceased hammering holes in the trees and stopped long enough to inspect the stranger. It may have been only a trick of the bluejay's to entice the worker away from the tree to allow a raid on the store-house of acorns. It did the pilferer no good, however; for the carpenter-bird never makes a mistake in selecting acorns to fit the

holes made for them. From the beginning of time the bluejay has never been able to appreciate this fact.

The chip-munks, the grasshoppers and the squirrels peeped and wondered from different points of vantage, while a mother partridge by fluttering and scurrying along the ground, sought to divert attention from her tiny striped-back brood huddled up on one foot under a friendly bunch of wild-strawberry leaves.

A pair of quail established themselves in the screen of a honey-suckle vine, and the little crested head of the family was feeding his small mate a dainty tid-bit, having coaxed her up into that leafy retreat to discuss the viand. Ring-doves cooed lovingly to each other, while the now extinct wild turkey sunned itself and preened its bronze feathers, perched high on the top of the bare rock above.

Up near the snow-line were red patches of snow-plants, looking like huge semi-transparent globules of crystallized sugar, having stem, bells and leaves all of one color, curiously mingled and intertwined.

Every inch of Akaza's advance was contested by some flowering plant. Sometimes it was the drooping boughs of the white blossoming dog-wood. Again, it was a rhododendron bush stubbornly blocking the way. Or, perhaps, it was a shower of azalea blooms that fairly smothered him. The spice-bush, with its long, slender green leaves, and odd-shape wine-colored flowers, locked horns with the tall shapely Shasta Lily.

The gossamer, glass-like mountain mahogany disputed honors with a flaring brown-and-orange tiger-lily, while the pentstemon, distinctly blue at the base and pink at the rim of its cup, coquetted with a

dainty butterfly-lily. "Like a bubble borne on air, floats the shy Mariposa Bell," with its purplish white, its faint tint of pink or pale gold, each petal brocaded in soft shades of bronze-brown or patched with plush, as if fairy finger-tips had smutched them before the paints were dry.

Who does not know the yellow buttercup which faces the world everywhere, the red columbine, whose chandelier of scarlet tongues makes light in dark places, or the well-beloved larkspur?

Then purple thistle, goldenrods and dandelions shook their heads vigorously in the refreshing breeze, and argued it out with the grasses and ice-plants lying flat on the ground, where only a muchly debased cactus bristled and threatened everything that ventured even to look at its forbidden fruit.

The day was well nigh spent when Akaza approached the camp near the mouth of the Indian Canyon. Yermah and Kerœcia advanced to meet him, hand in hand, like happy children. Kerœcia did not wait for a formal presentation but came forward graciously.

"Patriarch and hierophant," she said, "this temple awaits thy ministration. The love and obedience of my people and myself are thine to command."

"Fair daughter of the gods, thou hast already a place in my heart, as I perceive thou hast in the affections of my comrades. Mayst thou ever be surrounded by a nimbus of joy and gladness."

As Akaza's lips lightly brushed her glowing cheek, Yermah perceived that his vision was turned inward and that he prayed silently.

Kerœcia turned toward her attendants, but with her own hands served Akaza curds and a gourd of

goat's milk. She also broke the thin corn cakes and arranged some fruit temptingly near him. Akaza opened an oblong comb of wild honey and laid the ripe figs around it. As he poured thick, yellow cream over them, he murmured:

"As it was written! As it was written!"

Concerned for him, Yermah touched him on the shoulder.

"Is it not well?" he asked eagerly.

When the elder man saw the glow of happiness on the questioning face, he involuntarily groaned; but he answered steadily:

"From the beginning all things are ordered well."

* * * * * * * *

The evening shadows grew apace; but before darkness came on, Kerœcia prepared the pipes, which were to be lighted as an offering to fire.

Igniting the first one, a fragile porcelain bowl with an amber mouthpiece, she first drew three puffs out of the pipe, and then emptied the ashes on a platter of beaten silver. Dexterously replenishing the tobacco and substituting an ivory mouthpiece, she passed it to Yermah. He followed her example, and replacing the ivory with tortoise-shell, handed the pipe to Akaza.

The priestesses and the remainder of the company did likewise, always substituting one stick for another until all had smoked and each had a souvenir which was believed to bring good luck. The ashes were placed in the urn with the rose ashes collected from the ark — and the great Monbas festival was over.

Kerœcia was not a Monbas. Her people were known to the Atlantians as Ians; to the Persians, they

were Scythians; to the Medes, they were known as Suani; to the early Europeans, they were Visigoths, alternately feared and admired; while by later generations, they were called Circassians.

Theirs was the Vinland of the Norsemen and their empire extended over a large part of ancient Persia. They were old in civilization, before Nineveh and Babylon. Theirs was the land of Phrasus, where the Argonauts sailed after the siege of Troy. At that time, they had outlying colonies along the Siberian and extreme northwestern coast of America. The Aleutian group of islands was then an unbroken chain, with a climate as mild as any portion of the temperate zone.

Kerœcia, a pure-blooded Aryan, was the crown princess of the reigning house of Ian, and it was after her abduction that the famous fortification named by the Greeks, "Gates of Caucasus," was built in the Darien Pass of the Causasus Mountains leading out from Tiflis.

From the beginning of history, patriotism and beauty have been accredited these people. Mithridates and Schamyl are the heroes of later times. There is a tragic pathos in the self-immolation this remnant of half a million souls voluntarily underwent when they were conquered by Russia. After this event, they emigrated in a body and became Turkish exiles.

"Speak freely, as thou wouldst to a father," said Akaza to Kerœcia, privately, the next morning, while the whole company were on their way to Bridal Veil Falls. "If our offer to arbitrate between thy people and Eko Tanga is displeasing to thee, consider all things unsaid."

"It is a question my followers must decide for themselves. They need have no fear. I will never leave them. They stole me away when a child but I love them as my own."

"Rumor has it that thy visit was compulsory — that the Monbas brought thee here intending to fortify the place and then refuse to receive Eko Tanga."

"This is not true. I came to perform the rite of renewal and purification, and shall tell the representatives from my father that I do not desire my so-called freedom. He should long ago have given the Monbas all that he has promised them in hope of having me returned to him."

"Then thou art not retained against thy wish?" asked Yermah, who in company with Orondo joined them in time to hear the last remark.

"No, truly. The Monbas are as dependent as children and in no circumstances will I fail in my duty to them."

"Wilt thou visit Tlamco while Eko Tanga is here?"

It would have been hard to determine which of the men felt the greatest interest in her answer. Yermah, Akaza and Orondo were each a study at this moment.

"My followers shall answer thy question. If consistent with their wishes, it will greatly please me to go."

"Then we shall be honored with thy presence soon," said Orondo. "A feeling of delicacy represses an expression of opinion. But I have knowledge that they will feel more secure if thou wilt accept our protection."

"And the same feeling would prompt me to ask their permission," she answered with a smile.

"So be it. To serve loyally is the office we desire."

* * * * * * *

"This bright reflected glory pictures life," exclaimed Yermah, as the warm afternoon sun spanned the long flowing veil of the falls with a succession of rainbows.

"Tell us why," asked Kerœcia, and with a gesture of silence awaited an answer.

The pink and pride of Tlamco was before them, but he was still too young a man to teach philosophy. He looked appealingly at Akaza.

"Tell them why this rainbow is like the upward spiral compared with humanity," directed Akaza. Then he turned to the multitude and said:

"Hear my pupil with patience. It is not lawful for youth to speak esoterically."

Yermah flushed with pleasure and answered readily:

"Love, as the negative, or feminine, ray of Biune Deity is content and ever seeks to enfold. Wisdom, as the positive, or masculine, ray, is restless, and always in pursuit. The feminine forces in nature strive to encircle the atom, while the masculine attempt to propel it in a straight line. From this dual action of spiritual potentialities is born the spiral — the symbol of eternal progression. Man's will is electric, penetrating and disruptive. The will of woman is magnetic, attractive and formative. The two express the polar opposites of nature's creative powers."

"The sun is the center," continued the speaker,

" and around him, like a group of obedient children, are the seven planets of the mystical chain. Each orb produces innumerable types of fauna and flora, corresponding to the action of its own peculiar grades of spiritual force. Each comprises a miniature world of its own. But each planet contains all the attributes of the other six."

" We will engrave these sayings on plates of copper, write them on skins of animals, mold them on cylinders of clay, that they may instruct our tribesmen," said the Monbas to each other in undertones.

" From the spinal column and the base of the brain issue streams of vitalizing power, causing individuals to attract or repel one another. These radiating magnets finally assume the form of spirals, which encircle the earth and penetrate to its very center, and then expand themselves, mist-like, into beautiful rainbows, such as we see here."

" In which direction do they go? " asked Kerœcia.

" They flow backward in their orbit, and gradually ascend spirally. The first round corresponds to the earth's annual orbit around the sun, and is red. Each convolution doubles in size as it ascends. The second round is orange; the third, yellow; the fourth, green; the fifth, blue; the sixth, indigo; and the last is violet."

" Haille! Haille! " they cried. And the outburst was as spontaneous from one side as from the other.

* * * * * * *

Kerœcia held up her hand to command attention.

" Comrades, thou knowest the mission of our brothers from Tlamco. What are thy wishes? "

" We desire the little mother to follow her own

inclination. We feel that she would be safe and free from annoyance in Tlamco," they answered.

Kerœcia smiled broadly. Turning to Yermah, she asked:

"When will thy city receive me?"

"Whenever it pleases thee to come. We will gladly do escort duty now."

"That were not possible. But in a fortnight expect me."

"Haille! Haille!" echoed again and again.

It was fully an hour before the presents were all exchanged. There were exquisite articles of ivory, carved and chased in colors, and inlaid with metals and stones. Baskets of incredible fineness and blankets such as the Navajo Indians used to make were given by the Monbas.

Cunningly wrought cups of pottery were offered to Kerœcia by Ildiko, one being of her own make. It was round, and had for a handle a female head, which was an excellent likeness of herself. Taking a finely woven horsehair rope, which terminated in oblong onyx balls — Kerœcia swung one end high over her head, while retaining the other in her left hand. Facing Yermah, she entangled him completely by a dexterous turn of her wrists, despite his playful protest. The two balls swinging in opposite directions rapidly encircled and held him as if in a grip of steel.

"That, also, is a spiral movement," she exclaimed, mischievously.

"And one which I have neither the desire nor the power to control or escape," he replied, meaningly.

"The laws of hospitality declare the property con-

fiscate to thee. The cord should be condemned to a life of hard service."

"On the contrary, it shall have a high place in my affections, and shall receive state honors."

There was that in his look and voice which sent the warm blood mantling to her cheek and brow.

Akaza came forward and with a blessing slipped a ring on her little finger. It was set with a garnet, having a lion intaglio.

"This will guard thee on thy journey, and prevent evil machinations from having control over the matters in hand."

What she said in return was drowned in the blare of trumpets and the general preparations for departure.

"May Ambra plant flowers and make thy life a garden spot. May the Good Spirit protect and bless thee and thine," was shouted after the moving column.

"May the spirits of darkness never cast a shadow on thy pathway," came in answering echoes, as the trees and rocks finally hid the departing embassy.

CHAPTER SEVEN

KERŒCIA VISITS THE ENCHANTED GARDENS

IT was called the "Lifting of Banners" the day that the high-priestess, Kerœcia, arrived in Tlamco and the anniversary was for centuries after, celebrated with much pomp and ceremony.

Stout ropes of similar fiber to that in use to-day were stretched from the inner to the outer circle of obelisks. At regular intervals along these lines were strung bits of cotton cloth in octavos of coloring, alternating square and triangular shapes with innumerable devices painted upon them.

Pennants of the priesthood, of the civic federation, and of the innumerable clans, were everywhere afloat on the breeze, while Iaqua was a mass of Monbas streamers, banners and flags. All of the balsas flew the colors of the high-priestess, and there was a splendid escort pageant along the canal.

When Kerœcia approached the landing, long lines of citizens extended from Iaqua to the water's edge. As Yermah led the way in a state chariot, a deafening shout arose. The wheels fairly flew over the causeway as the thoroughbred horses galloped in even step under Yermah's steady hand. Kerœcia stood beside him happy and smiling graciously.

The chariot was of ivory and gold, resplendent with jewels. The hub of each wheel was a golden sunburst, while the twelve spokes representing the

signs of the zodiac, were outlined with appropriate gems and colors. This gorgeous state vehicle was drawn by three white horses caparisoned in creamy white and gold with rows of jewels and crests of tropic plumage held in place with long twisted ropes of yellow silk. A canopy of the same flaming yellow fabric intricately brocaded, protected the occupants from the sun.

Yermah wore a white chamois tunic, rich with gold embroideries, his head being covered with a helmet of the same metal. His mantle was a gorgeous feather mosaic of bronze green. In addition to a sword, he carried a circular shield of bronze, in the center of which was a dragon and in the outer edge were seven rings. The four seasons were also shown. The scenes represented plowing, seed-time, harvest, and winter surrounded by a meander symbolizing the ocean.

Kerœcia was enveloped in a mantle of ermine, lined with the soft gray breast of sea-gulls. On her head was a rainbow band of silk fastened in front by a jeweled aigrette. Both Kerœcia and Yermah wore the full decoration and insignia of their rank. The out-riders and attendants were mounted and equipped as befitted their station. Even Oghi, chained to the back of the chariot, seemed to enjoy the pageant.

The main entrance to Iaqua was on the south side, where the massive double-doors of the vestibule led to a terrace which was approached by broad, low steps. There were eight of these flights, and it required three more steps to reach the threshold which was of pink-veined marble. On each side of the rows of steps were slightly raised flat pedestals sur-

mounted by groups of statuary of well-known Atlantian heroes. These burnished figures were made of that peculiar bronze amalgam, known only to the ancients, which never lost its original brilliancy, and being exceptionally hard was also of fine color.

There was a colonnade of massive marble pillars supporting a frieze and entablature. Above this was a flat roof surrounded by a parapet breast-high. The outside walls were of marble veneer unpolished and laid like rubble over the thick adobe bricks.

Once inside the vestibule, a scene of splendor greeted the eye. On the right, or eastern side of the entrance, was the rising sun-god driving his four horses out of the sea, the group being of flawless marble and of heroic size. The sun-burst around the head of the figure, the trappings of the horses, and the trimmings of the chariot were of virgin gold.

On the left, or western side, the moon-goddess was represented as driving her horses into the sea. She was seated on the back of one and guiding the other six. This group was cut in black marble and profusely ornamented with silver.

The square vestibule was finished in hard woods, richly carved and polished. Rare and choice skins were stretched upon the inlaid floor, and there was a rose-jar of fine pottery at each side of the door. Richly carved chairs outlined the walls, while perfumed lamps hung above the mantel, beneath which glowed a bed of live coals. Placed over the blaze, on a thin glass rod, was a small ball of spongy platinum. The lamp was lighted and allowed to burn until the ball became a lurid red, after which the flame was extinguished, leaving the ball incandescent for a long time, gently heating the perfumed

oil and sending a delicious fragrance throughout the room.

The vestibule opened into an interior court where a fountain played and birds of gay plumage kept up an incessant noise. Pet animals roamed at will. Seats were provided in the shady nooks and cushions for the tessellated floors. There was a colonnade in the inner court, similar in style to the outer one. The balcony overhead was of carved onyx surmounted by a veritable garden of rare plants in handsome pots, trellised and interlaced across the open space. A pyramidal fountain in an octagonal basin, placed in the center, was supported by eight huge bronze lions.

On the north, adjoining Yermah's private apartments, were the reception rooms and banquet-halls. It was into the former that Kerœcia and her women were conducted while the men were made comfortable in the Hall of Ambassadors, to the west.

Here was a wainscoting of odoriferous cedar, carved as intricately as a sandal-wood fan, above which hung richly dyed tapestries of historical import, strips of silk embroidery and feather-work of indescribable beauty.

On the floor of pine, scrubbed to immaculate whiteness, lay a wonderful white carpet, bordered with gold and silver, in which were incrusted precious stones, representing many kinds of choice flowers. The leaves were formed of emerald, jade, aqua marine, and Amazon stones, while the buds and blossoms were composed of pearls, rubies and sapphires in the rough. The only cut and polished stones in the entire carpet were the diamonds, sparkling in the center of the blossoms, like dewdrops.

Curtains as fine as cobwebs hung over the tiny

square-paned windows, and there were many terra cotta stools, ornamented in low-tone outline work, detailing the mythology and folk-lore of Atlantis.

Exquisite screens closed all entrances except the outside, where thick bronze slabs were fastened by heavy bolts and chains. Admission was sought by striking these plates with a mallet of inlaid bronze.

A cloudless, moonlight sky added much to the fairy-like effect of the night scene. Between the banners were silken lanterns gay in coloring, shade and decoration, and these twinkled like spheres of many colored fire. The brilliant blaze of light on the signal-towers, the innumerable rockets, showering gold, silver or rainbow balls in profusion, or long, forked arrows, made the night a memorable one.

Setos, the inventor of pyrotechnics, outdid himself, and the whole population were in attendance to witness and enjoy the display. Not a housetop in Tlamco but answered the pretty code of greetings arranged from the battlements of Iaqua. By these means Kerœcia was enabled to thank each regiment, guild, clan and family taking part in her triumphant entry early in the day.

When the high-priestess opened her door the next morning, she found the passage barred by big-faced velvet pansies, crisp, fresh and still moist with dew.

"To whose thoughtfulness am I debtor?" she asked of one of the armed guardians pacing the hallway before the door.

"To Orondo. And he begs that thou wilt accept his escort for a visit to the gardens, at such hour as best suits thy pleasure and comfort."

"It will please me to see him at once," she answered.

Alcyesta, Suravia and Mineola were examining the rare basket filled with flowers which Yermah had sent with a kindly message.

"The daffodils show his regard; the ferns, his sincerity; and the violets, his extreme modesty," they said, with giggling laughter, betraying the tension of nerves still animating them. They were agog with expectation, and when told of the projected visit to the peerless gardens they entered into the arrangement with all the zest and abandon of curious girlhood.

"From the roses on thy cheeks, I am justified in the inference that troops of good entities have guarded thy slumbers," said Orondo, when the women came into the vestibule where he was awaiting them.

"I can only hope that the same blessed oblivion has been thy portion," responded Kerœcia.

"Rahula, Ildiko and Alcamayn join us at the sundial, presently. They are intent upon a natal observance which, by thy leave we shall witness."

Palanquins were their mode of conveyance.

"Alcyesta, Suravia and Mineola, look at the answer to our signals of last night," exclaimed Kerœcia. "Oh! see the rose garlands on the obelisks, and the beautiful flowers everywhere!"

As she said this, a delegation of school children strewed her pathway with wall-flowers.

"Fidelity in adversity! How considerate and kind thou art!"

She begged to be set down and stood with her hands full of the blossoms, which she repeatedly carried to her lips, tossing them to the children about her. It was an indiscriminate mass of little ones,

augmented by a bevy of older girls, laden with myrrh, wheat, oats and sprigs of heliotrope. Before Kerœcia realized it, her vacant chair was filled with flowering sage and Sweet William in bloom.

This language of esteem and gallantry was a tribute from some warrior priests sent to keep order and to assist in escort duty. Kerœcia and her companions wound the flower-wreaths in their hair, placed clusters of the same at their throats, and in their girdles, and carried as many more as their hands could hold.

"Haille! Haille!" spearsmen and school children shouted in chorus, only desisting when the garden gates were reached, and the party halted for a final exchange of courtesies. Kerœcia turned to Orondo.

"I love these kind, good-hearted people," she said.

"Small wonder that they should love thee in return. The Monbas are not the only men willing to die for thee." The flush on his face, his earnestness of manner and speech, should have warned Kerœcia; but at that moment, she was intently examining the sculpture on the stone aqueduct, here emptying into an artificial lake. Realizing the situation, Orondo was quick to turn it to advantage.

"I have a feeling of kinship with this body of water, since it is mine by right of plan and construction. The gardens are my special charge. We of Aztlan have choice of occupation, and I have sole command over this spot."

"Thou art generously endowed with the sense of the beautiful," she returned, in appreciation. "I am curious to know why this curbing is not in straight, but in wavy lines."

"Because it is a meander imitating a river of spiritual force. The carving, also, conveys the same idea."

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The party had crossed the avenue leading from the market walls to the Temple of Neptune. The aqueduct surrounded the outside enclosure, and was built of solid sandstone and masonry, supported by arches of the same. The water in the canal came from Lake La Honda and skirted Blue Mountain. Where it emptied into Ohaba Lake, in the gardens, it made a pretty cascade over a profusion of rocks and water-plants.

To the right of the market was a sun-dial, which was a colossal bronze figure of a full-armored warrior thrusting furiously at his own shadow. This statue, of perfect model and workmanship, was placed on a pivot which revolved once in every twenty-four hours. At the feet was a glass dial, whose grains of gold slipped out at stated intervals, one at a time, sticking fast on the quicksilver bed prepared for them. The warrior could only scowl at, and threaten the shining hours.

When the sun at rising darted a direct shadow by the gnomon, or machete, in the hand of a soldier, and at its height, or mid-day, the figure made no shade, the populace adorned it with leaves and odoriferous herbs. Then they placed a chair made of choice cut-flowers on top of the helmet, saying that the sun appeared on his most glittering throne. After this, with great ostentation and rejoicings, they made offerings of gold, silver and precious stones.

Among the spectators of the ceremony, were Kerœcia and Orondo. His interest centered wholly

in her — hers, in the novel rites and the people, who seemed to feel honored by her presence.

On an eminence beyond the sun-dial was the House of Piety, a structure having many apartments, filled with priests devoted to the healing art. The grounds between were laid out in regular squares and the intersecting paths were bordered with trellises supporting creepers and aromatic shrubs. These swayed in the breeze, partially screening the view by a quaint tracery of floral net-work.

Setos had been paying a visit to the House of Piety. On his way to the salt-water fish-ponds, located near Temple Avenue, but further up, he was startled by a low, sullen growl, and a quick leap into a clump of bushes near him. He was unarmed, save for a serpentine knife in his leather belt, and this he instantly unsheathed and was prepared for attack. He had not long to wait before the blood-shot eyes of Oghi peered through the greenery, and he could hear its tail lashing on the ground as the animal prepared for a spring.

At this juncture, there was an ominous rattle of the chain, and, in an instant, Oghi had turned a complete somersault in the air. Akaza jerked the chain hard enough to snap the self-clasping catch planned for such an emergency, and the ocelot came down on three legs.

"Down, Oghi! Down, sir!" sternly commanded Akaza. This was answered by a howl of mingled rage and surprise, as Oghi crouched with each hair on back and tail erect with hostility.

"Remain motionless, Setos! Shouldst thou move I would not be responsible for the consequences," commanded Akaza, as he hastily twisted the chain

around a good-sized flowering shrub. He managed to get the eye of the infuriated animal, and in a few moments the danger was over. None but a man absolutely master of self and conditions, could have quelled this beast as Akaza did.

"Oghi, lie down! Lie down, sir!"

Without the least show of resistance, the ocelot obeyed him.

"What thievish mischief has that brute been doing?" asked Setos, allowing anger to surplant a sickening sense of fear.

"Let us ascertain. He has broken away from his keeper, else he would not be here," replied Akaza.

"Dost thou see footprints in the soft mud at the bottom of the tank? I am persuaded that Oghi made a meal of the rarest fish in the pond." Setos was at his favorite occupation — he did so dearly love to exaggerate misdeeds of any kind.

"There are feathers, too, all about here," he called as he ran from one rookery to another. "There are but four of the quetzal left in the silver fir. Yermah cannot be permitted to give away any of them. All he can do is to present these feathers to the high-priestess."

Setos came back with a handful of brilliant green plumes, about three feet long showing rainbow tints in their metallic luster. There was also a portion of scarlet breast still dripping with blood, but that was all.

"I find this luminous tree badly broken," said Akaza. "Oghi must have attempted to jump over it. He has broken the whole top off, and split the bole down to the roots. Disappointment awaits Orondo because he planned to bring our visitors here

and show them how this tree lights up its surroundings at night. It were best to find out whether the torch-fish has been injured."

Setos poked and raked among the pools and eddies of the pond, but reported the torch-fish uninjured. This member of the finny tribe does not use the torch for purposes of illumination. When mealtime comes, it lights up to attract smaller fish. They, mistaking the lantern for a phosphorescent insect, dart at it only to find their way into a pair of capacious jaws.

The evidence was wholly circumstantial; but, it was decided to make an example of Oghi, so the ocelot was led up the main thoroughfare hobbling on three legs.

As a matter of fact, Oghi had spent the entire morning chasing his own shadow, going into a veritable spasm of excitement when he saw his image reflected in the water. It took him long to decide that it was not some other animal when the image moved. Oghi tired himself out trying to discover the reason why the reflection undulated and rippled, when he, himself, was motionless. He flounced in and out of the pond so often, that he could not possibly have caught a fish. They were securely hidden through it all, and a huge rat did the damage found in the aviary.

Poor Oghi! His greatest fault was an abiding dislike to Setos, and his antipathies seemed to center around that one idea. This was why he snarled and snapped every time he came near the sun-dial. By some process of reasoning, the ocelot decided that the sun-dial was modeled after Setos.

These repeated plunges disturbed the glass-bot-

tomed wooden box, used to produce a beautiful optical illusion in the salt water. The box was without cover, and so placed that the glass bottom was slightly below the surface. This arrangement enabled the observer to look steadily downward to the sea-floor itself. The first impression was that the glass possessed magical powers. Not a tree, nor a flower actually on the land above, but was here reflected in colors and forms of airiest grace.

Orondo piloted his party to where there was a sheltered cocoa-palm tree. This was a very unusual tree, for on more than one occasion a vegetable pearl had been found among its branches. Such an one was given to Kerœcia, and she was also allowed the choice of opals taken from the joints of bamboo reeds.

"If thou art willing," said Alcamayn, "I will cut the seven pointed star of Jupiter in this gem at the polishing, and then thou wilt have an amulet against disease."

"By so doing, thou wilt give great pleasure, and, if agreeable I desire a bracelet made of this vegetable ivory," she answered.

"Why not put the pearl in the center and an opal on each side?" suggested Ildiko. "Here is a perfect match for the one thou hast chosen. Why not have the sign of Jupiter cut on one and his star on the other? This will surely bring good fortune."

While they were selecting the ivory and discussing the details of ornament, Orondo busied himself with a tiny filigree silver cage containing a couple of giant fire-flies.

"Am I in an enchanted garden?" laughingly inquired Kerœcia when she was tolled off to a shady

nook to inspect these wonderful insects. Orondo covered the cage with a black cloth, and instantly a ruddy glow proceeded from two glandular spots between the eyes and under each wing of the fire-flies. Soon the rays changed to a golden yellow, equal to a candle in brightness.

"To protect thee from genii," said Orondo, "are a pair of racket-tailed humming-birds. These little fellows are booted and spurred like regular warriors, and are competent to fight any size or condition of feather-wearer."

The cage, rich in carving, was made of sandal-wood. From the pagoda-like roof hung four small triangular-shaped banners.

"It were a gentle soul which planned these kind remembrances," murmured Kerœcia, softly.

"These come from one who has been deeply moved by the simplicity of thy ministrations," gallantly responded Orondo.

Kerœcia unwittingly led the way toward a swampy-looking inclosure fenced by poison-ivy and climbing sumac which she did not dare touch.

"Thou art wandering into forbidden domains," remonstrated Orondo, hastening to her side. "Nature broods her deadliest poisons in this company. Here the carrot, parsnip, and celery families are undergoing regeneration. In time, I shall have them suitable for food. That pretty lily thou art admiring is the deadly hemlock; and here are the fox-glove, the henbane, and the jimson-weed —"

"Surely I need no reminder of murderous quality here," rejoined Kerœcia. She was gazing at a cluster of aconite. "My people have used this with terrible effect on themselves and on their enemies."

She had reference to the poisoned arrows employed by the Monbas in their expeditions against the Ians.

A swift-footed runner, wearing state livery, approached, and prostrating himself before Kerœcia, said:

"Yermah, the Dorado, presents his compliments, and begs that the high-priestess, Kerœcia, will grace the Hall of Embassadors with her presence. Ben Hu Barabe, Eko Tanga, and the Dorado await her there."

"Immediate compliance is the only form grateful obedience takes," she answered, while a swift pallor overspread her countenance. "Let us go at once!"

A shade of disappointment came over Orondo's face. He had hoped to show Kerœcia more of the beauties of this royal garden. There was something of the impatience of the lover and the selfishness of a rival in his feeling. They were passing through the landscape set with night-blooming plants.

As they neared Lake Ohaba, a long, narrow body of water, formed artificially, there were masses of water-lilies anchored on the surface. Tiny air-bubbles and tinier mouths indicated the presence of gold and silver fish, darting about unmindful of the water-fowl feeding on the banks, or sunning themselves on the floating gardens which dotted the miniature lake.

Bridges, ponds, waterfalls and temples covered the landscape of the floating gardens, but everything was constructed on the smallest scale possible. The trees were old and gnarled, and the moss-covered masonry was no larger than a doll's house and grounds. Even the dahlias and the chrysanthemums were dwarfed into pigmy sizes.

Kerœcia must have felt something of Orondo's

disappointment; for, she halted in front of the fanciful pavilion facing these movable wonders and ordered the palanquin which was to convey her back to Iaqua.

"I am loathe to leave the spot where Nature and man have wrought so well together," she said, with simplicity and appreciation.

"Such pretty reluctance reconciles one to that obedience which sometimes tries the souls of men," responded Orondo, satisfied with the admiration so plainly reflected in her open countenance.

As the tamanes knelt to receive their human freight, one of them presented Kerœcia with a basket ornamented with beads and feathers in quaint combination, and filled with ripe pomelos. The fruit was partially concealed by grape leaves, and was a simple offering to quench thirst.

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In laying out the city of Tlamco, the four points of the compass were designated by different colors. The east, from whence come revivified nature and springtime, was marked by green. This symbolizes fulfillment and perfection. It holds out the hope of immortality and victory, in the laurel and in the palm. For this reason was the emerald considered the happiness-bringing stone. The Aztecs, Chinese, and Persians attach great significance to green as all their uniforms and ceremonies demonstrate.

The west was designated by white, the emblem indicating integrity in the judge, humility in the sick, and chastity in women. In a spiritual sense it is the acme of all — divinity. When worn as mourning white expresses negation of self.

The south was red, signifying fire, and all phases

of life on the physical plane. The red color of the blood has its origin in the action of the heart, which from time immemorial has been associated with love.

The north was black, ever the symbol of death and despair. These people knew of the recurring Ice Age, and to them the north was typical of death, since all former civilization had perished from extreme cold.

The center of the city was marked yellow, in honor of the sun, the symbol of light and wisdom.

The Grand Servitor was expected to wear a yellow or red head-covering with gold ornaments, and he must at all times use yellow for a parasol or canopy. The highest dignitaries carried green umbrellas and there was always a bit of green showing in the head-coverings. The lower officials carried red parasols or wore red; while the citizens wore black, or carried black overhead.

Akaza was always provided with a white umbrella.

CHAPTER EIGHT

A COVETED SPOT AND A PRICELESS TREASURE

THE Hall of Ambassadors at Iaqua was still the scene of an animated discussion.

There were groups of scribes, runners and astrologers excitedly examining maps and charts, while knots of citizens gathered around the old men and heard from their lips the particulars. Some were priests, others were treasure keepers, judges and councilors; but one and all were disposed to stand by the records.

Patient, respectful tamanes glided noiselessly here and there, opening and placing some of the books on the tables ready for inspection, while they closed and carried others back to the vaulted recesses where they had been under lock and key since the foundation of Tlamco. Some of the manuscripts were on cotton cloth, others were of carefully prepared skins, tanned and dressed until soft as silk.

For ages the Indians have known how to prepare superior chamois. When they tan a skin it looks like soft, pliant yellow velvet and has an odor peculiar to itself. These qualities are imparted by smoking it thoroughly over a fire composed of certain herbs. Rain has no effect upon well-tanned Indian buck-skin. This is why an Indian moccasin is always as yielding as cloth, while as thick and soft as felt.

A composition of gum and silk tissue made by a process known to-day by the Japanese and Chinese was invariably used by the Monbas for the transcription of public documents. Their books were bound with blocks of polished wood, and folded together, like a fan. These surfaces were inscribed on both sides so that the writing was continuous, ending where it began, but on the opposite side of the same square.

Around Ben Hu Barabe, the Civil Chief of the Monbas, were a number of Monbas warriors in full coats of mail and side arms. Setos mingled freely with them and appeared to espouse their side of the controversy, while Akaza conversed in subdued tones with Eko Tanga, the tall, fierce-looking, but well-mannered emissary from the Ians. Yermah had that freedom and grace of movement born in natural leaders, and there was an unconscious recognition of this quality wherever he went among the disputants.

A young Monbas warrior stood near him and leaned intently over the neatly inscribed parchment rolls bearing the official seal of Atlantis. The leaves of maguey and agave had been used in the fabrication of this beautiful paper.

"These measurements and observations were taken shortly after the shaping of Hotara (Lone Mountain), and before the surrounding tumuli had been finished," said Yermah.

He was seated at a round table in the center of the room in an entirely characteristic pose. One foot was drawn well back and poised on the toes, while the other was thrust forward but little in advance of the knee and leg. On his head a single band of filigree gold was relieved by a carbuncle of rare brilliancy

which sparkled warm and glowing in the medallion center.

The Dorado's cloth-of-gold cloak, lined with scarlet and black brocade, was thrown carelessly back from his shoulders, and his thumb, which grasped the edge of the table to balance his body, as he leaned forward eagerly, was banded by a curiously wrought signet ring. There was masculinity and strength in the jewel which was the only ornament on the virile hand.

"Our ancestors knew these things well," answered the warrior after a minute examination.

"The city was young then. But I see no reason why the accuracy of this work should be questioned. I hope that Ben Hu Barabe may be induced to see it so."

"The scale is one one-hundred-millionths, and shows the diameter of all the planets from Hotara. There has been but little variation in eccentricity of orbits since," declared Yermah, now busy with computations, which he made by using an abacus, as the Chinese have always done.

Ben Hu Barabe still studied his maps and charts. He was industriously making deductions from the highly colored picture-writing, though the cloth on which they were painted was yellow and musty with age. His calculations were from Las Papas as a center. In present day reckoning the radius extended from Clarendon Heights along the coast to Pescadero Point; then to Santa Cruz and Point Reyes. From these observations the first surveys were made, and it was from these markings that the treaties had been negotiated between the Monbas and the Allantians when the latter colonists first came.

"It is not easy to ascertain the date of our computations and measurements," said Ben Hu Barabe. "But the land in dispute is not much, at any rate. If Eko Tanga insists that his government has some unsettled claim against the Monbas, I am willing that thou shouldst decide it," he said to Yermah.

"The difference is considerable between the calculation of one one-hundred millionths and one of one-fifty millionths. And there is a variance between The Twins and Hotara as central points," Yermah replied. "In my time the place of the sun in the center of Tlamco has been the point of vantage. Computations of the diameters of the heavenly hosts are here accurately given."

"From the beginning until now, the Monbas have reckoned all their happenings by this picture," said Ben Hu Barabe, his voice again showing signs of irritation. "It is held in our inner hearts with profound reverence, and it is a vexation of spirit to have it questioned. Eko Tanga has little respect for the traditions and pride of the mountain people."

"The high-priestess Kerœcia, will then lend us her counsel," said Yermah, soothingly. "She is of the blood of Ian, but she loves the Monbas well. Her serene countenance confronts us," he added hastily, as the crowd separated to make room for the high-priestess and the entire party from the gardens.

Every woman knows that it was not the fresh air, only, which gave the color to Kerœcia's cheek, and made her eyes sparkle like tiny stars as she permitted Yermah to conduct her to a seat beside him under the grand canopy. All Tlamco had a feeling of satisfaction in the manner and the method of his escort. Some time elapsed before either could sufficiently

acknowledge the applause spontaneously given; but when the Dorado held up his hand commanding silence, the stillness was absolute.

"Comrades and friends, a difference of opinion exists between the emissary of Ian, Eko Tanga, and Ben Hu Barabe, Chief of the Monbas, as to the hereditary rights of each to the lands now held by the Azes. Before our beloved Tlamco rested among the seven hills, there were wise men who noted the ways of the sun, and his attendants, and decreed that thus far, and no farther should the limits extend. No one disputed the rights of the Monbas. They made The Twins their own, and no one murmured. Then appeared the hordes of Ian. They came through the trackless forest of the Aleuts, following the warm tide southward. The snow-peaks of Elias, Tacoma, and Shasta [1] pointed the way and after many days they came to the end of the Monbas possessions."

Among the Monbas there was a tempestuous wave of displeasure against the revival of old scores and the ill-will was as heartily returned by Eko Tanga's attendants. As for principles, their faces effectually masked the feelings while they gave Yermah their undivided attention.

"Here they found an amicable agreement between these brave men and the children of Atlantis," continued Yermah, conscious of the under-current of feeling. "It makes my heart glad to tell how the Azes and the Monbas have always been friends."

"Haille! Haille!" shouted his hearers, with one voice. "Haille! Haille!"

Satisfied that the ebullition of temper had safely

[1] Modern names are preferably employed.

spent itself, the Dorado boldly stated the point in dispute.

" It pleased the leaders of the Azes to erect a new city on the ruins of an old abandoned temple site, and they re-surveyed the vicinity from Mount Hotara. Like the Monbas sages, they had counsel of the heavenly bodies, and found the degree of prophecy fulfilled in the markings. It were a wearisome task to hear all of the things done at that time, but the Monbas and the Azes feel that they were well done."

Again the unspoken words reached his ears and the upturned faces before him beamed with satisfaction.

" The Monbas reckoned from The Twins to a smaller scale, but they took cognizance of the stars. Time has altered the bearings; but truth was in the beginning and must prevail in the end. Due allowance was then made for the failure of agreement between the new and the old reckonings, and for the difference in the point of view. The treaty following, whereby the Monbas gave eternal consent to the designs of the Azes, has been a source of joy to the Azes always."

" And to us," assented the Monbas, with a clamorous noise.

" Our friend and brother, Eko Tanga," continued Yermah, bowing to the Ians as he spoke, " comes with a claim against the decision of our ancestors. He denies the right of the Monbas to cede land to the Azes, since the Monbas came under allegiance to Ian, after the treaty was promulgated, and before the solemn covenant had record. The patient skill and industry of Atlantis has made this a garden spot,

and the Ians desire recognition of their pretentions.

"The murmurings of the Monbas have softened the hearts of the Ians, and their king decrees that the Monbas shall be free from tribute and have dominion over the land claimed by them, provided they will release the princess and the high-priestess Kerœcia from bondage."

Here the Monbas laughed derisively. Even Kerœcia smiled.

"It were unseemly of the Azes to interrupt their Servitor," said Orondo, sternly, as he sprang to his feet and faced his people determinedly. The rebuke did not fail of effect.

The undulating walls in different portions of Tlamco represented the gyrations of the cosmic serpent, which is matter, and quaintly sets forth man's incomings to, and out-goings from, material life. On a grand scale, the three points symbolized man's redemption by harmonizing the three planes of existence. Religious sentiment, as well as race prejudice, had something to do with the hostile feeling prevalent in the factions.

"Sufficient purses have been exchanged to make trade even, but the boundaries still lie in dispute," continued Yermah.

"Will the Dorado and these people hear me?" asked Eko Tanga, moved to speech.

"The safeguards of courtesy may be trusted thus far," quickly responded Yermah. "Apply thine ear faithfully that thou mayst comprehend the truth," he added, as he sat on a level with Kerœcia.

"A matter deserving close attention is the correction of the hazy, indistinct records by which cer-

tain lands are ceded," declared Eko Tanga. "The increase in learning makes the measurements legitimately subject to inquiry, and I crave assistance from the wise men here assembled. All Tlamco reckons from its center, and observes the present houses of the firmament for confirmation. By careful estimate, there is yet some favor due my master from the Monbas. A covenant to remain south of Elias's cone is all that the king desires. He is content to forego tribute or war service below this mountain."

It was plain that there were voices in the multitude which favored the Ians. It was known that the Monbas originally came from Ian, and loyalty to fatherland was a sterling virtue of the Azes.

Setos, quick to turn an advantage to himself, came forward and claimed a hearing.

"The sacred traditions of past times," he said, "lie deep in the hearts of the faithful, but justice demands much for posterity. The future is best served by full recognition of Monbas independence; they, in turn, must acquit themselves with honor. No man among the Azes desires to keep that which is not fairly won."

"Dost thou dare to accuse us of unfairness?" cried Ben Hu Barabe, rising hastily.

"The Ians have long discoursed against the award of land made by us to the Azes. Much travail of spirit has befallen us because of our pledges to thy ancestry. Fie upon thee, for an ingrate!" he continued, hotly.

Yermah and Akaza were on their feet in an instant.

"Setos had spoken without consideration," said Akaza, mildly. "No possible import of unfairness

is due to either party here. The measurements are the only questions to consider. Now, as of old, the digit, the palm of the hand, the face, and the cubit are the only means of reckoning. The first joint of the finger is no longer; the middle of the palm no wider; the cubit from finger to elbow is the same. But the stars have changed their courses; even the zodiac has slipped its leashes. Man may profit by such example. Have done with this useless turmoil. Let the Ian have his due, and let the high-priestess Kerœcia, loose her own bonds."

When he ceased speaking, the silence was intense.

"For this did I beseech thy presence," said Yermah, aside to the agitated princess.

"We love the priestess Kerœcia, and we will obey her," said Ben Hu Barabe, simply.

"The royal father and mother of the princess mourn continually. They beg and implore that she may be the light of their declining years. All Ian awaits an answer; and for that country I agree to abide by thy decision." Eko Tanga bowed toward Kerœcia, appealingly.

Striving to govern her emotion, Kerœcia put out a trembling hand to Yermah, and suffered herself to be led forward where she could be both seen and heard. She buried her face in her hands for a moment, then lifted it pale and stricken, but resolute.

"My comrades and my countrymen, duty oppresses my heart profoundly. That I do love and honor these who gave me life need not be affirmed. All that my father demands, I hereby pledge the Monbas to render. For myself there is no peace apart from the duty I owe these children of the forest. They look to me for spiritual guidance, and I will not

leave them." Her voice faltered, and she seemed ready to faint.

In the interim of silence, Eko Tanga said: "So be it! So be it!"

"Tell my beloved father that I can best serve him here; and that as proof of my devotion, I pledge my people to lasting peace. Hast thou the treaty in readiness?"

She made no pretense of reading its provisions, but turned to Ben Hu Barabe, and said authoritatively: "Sign!"

He readily affixed his signature. Eko Tanga followed, and then Yermah made use of the high-set signet on his thumb.

And this was the beginning of the end.

CHAPTER NINE

THE WOMEN'S DAY IN BOOTH AND BAZAAR

IT was fully ten o'clock before Kerœcia, attended entirely by women, finally made her appearance. She drove a splendid team of woodland caribou, harnessed to her traveling cart now made gay with bunting and flowers. There were tiny nosegays tied to the palmated antlers sweeping back over the long, shaggy bodies. The ribbons were threaded from one wide expanse to its fellow on the opposite side, and even to the bez-tynes coming down between the eyes and spreading protectingly over the elongated beak-like nose.

The snap and click of the spreading false hoofs of the caribou announced the advent of the party. Rahula and Ildiko stood on each side of Kerœcia, while Alcyesta, Suravia and Mineola balanced themselves by placing their hands on the shoulders in front of them.

Matu, Saphis and Phoda, the three caribou, were a perfect match in color, size and gait. The animals stood over three feet high with very wide and many tyned, spreading antlers. Matu, who was driven in the lead had a short shaggy mane of grayish white which lightened his reddish-brown coat, his four feet being evenly marked by the same white band. The strong necks, knee-joints and short muscular legs were built for strength and these roadsters handily trotted

past the barking dogs in the streets and on the highways. Their big eyes had nothing of the gazelle quality in them, but were alert, and the short lily-cup ear heard acutely, while the sense of smell was their finest quality.

If it were possible to imagine hilarity in a countenance so long drawn out and preternaturally grave, it may be said that these sagacious animals enjoyed showing their heels too, and dusting everything encountered on the road. Or, it may have been that they were envious of the burros with their bulging sides, dodging out of their way as they flew by.

A word and a sudden checking of the reins fastened to the nose, brought the team to a stand-still in front of a basketry. Here the party alighted and Kerœcia caressed her roadsters, giving each one a cake of salt, and scratching its nose affectionately. They manifested pleasure in their own special fashion, and suffered themselves to be coaxed away by a bundle of dry moss.

Inside the building were girls assorting thick packages of willow wands, and long stemmed, wiry grasses as well as splits of palms.

Kerœcia's eyes lit up as she recognized some of her favorite weaves. Bending over a young girl she took the work from her hands and began explaining an intricate decoration.

"Fifteen stitches to the digit is not fine enough for this acorn pattern, twenty-eight will serve thee better. Where the point of the acorn cuts off here, a bottom must be put in to give it standing power."

When the coil was properly started in stitch and pattern, she picked up a handful of grass soaking in a

shallow basket basin near by, and dexterously fashioned a tiny acorn, perfect in color and shape.

"Use this for a handle on the acorn cup suitable to cover this basket," she said.

To the delighted exclamations of thanks, she replied:

"May a good husband and sweet children grace thy home and bless thee with loving kindness."

The shamaness of the basket guild withdrew from a coil she had been weaving a priceless heirloom, inherited from her great-great-grandmother. This proved to be a long needle made from the wing-bone of a hawk and was believed to be an amulet of good luck.

"Will the high-priestess honor and make me happy by accepting this little token? She who uses it will have the blessing of the whole guild."

Kerœcia took the polished implement, and motioned one of her tamanes to approach. From his hands she received a parcel so delicate and precious that it was protected by a basket-covering of unique design. When she disclosed the contents there was an involuntary exclamation of "A—h—!" from all the curious weavers cognizant of it.

"Will the shamaness make me happy by accepting this example of my handicraft? I have worked on it three years," she said.

The gift was a fancy basket covered entirely with red-headed woodpeckers' scalps, among which were placed at intervals many hanging loops of tiny iridescent shells. Around the rim was an upright row of black quails' top-knots, nodding gayly.

Presently, a representative of the guild brought forward a dice-table top made in anticipation of this

visit. It was a round, flat tray, ornamented with dark-brown water lines on a cream-white ground. With it were eight acorn-shaped dice, inlaid with abalone shell and some richly carved ivory sticks with which to keep tally. The acorn shells had first been filled with pitch, and when hardened cleverly inlaid with abalone. Cradle and burden baskets used for storing grain differed in no wise from the weaves of the Monbas.

Row after row of every imaginable stitch and material filled the roomy building. Kerœcia was respectful in her attention to the workers but she forbore a longer interruption of the general trend of the work.

Into the pueblo, set apart for the pottery, one might with profit follow, or linger over the looms of the rug and blanket weavers, as Kerœcia did. But it is fair to suppose that modern eyes are familiar with the striking peculiarities of the Daghestan rugs and Navajo blankets, the stitches of one being familiar to the descendants of Kerœcia's forebears, while the Navajo Indians have preserved the secret of the other. One is characteristic of native Oriental invention, the other of native American.

"There is need of haste in returning," admonished Rahula, as the women climbed back into the car and started cityward. "We are due at the marketplace now."

"Content thyself. The caribou is an excellent traveler," was Kerœcia's assurance, as she gathered up the reins and shook the many stranded whip over the horns of her team. They started forward with the easy stride common to the elk family, and were not long in clearing a passage way through the

tamanes, trotting along the road carrying huge, well-filled baskets, one on each end of a pole slung across the shoulder. Mingling with them were burros so well burdened that nothing but their noses, tails and forefeet were visible.

The social corner-stone of Tlamco was not the family but the clan. Husband and wife must belong to different gentes, and the children claimed descent from the mother. The spheres of the sexes were clearly defined but manfully, the wife being the complete owner of the house and all it contained. If a mother, she was not required to perform other than household duties. Slovenliness was severely punished in both sexes, and so was idleness.

At no time was the life of the ordinary woman of greater hardship than is that of the wife of a poor man in any enlightened or so-called Christian country to-day. Should her husband ill-treat her, a woman of this civilization could permanently evict him from the home. The husband owned the crops until they were housed, and then the wife had an equal voice in their distribution. The live stock was his; but there was an unwritten code which forbade his disposing of it without consulting his wife.

For these reasons, certain of the afternoon hours of each day were set apart, in the market, by the guilds, for the reception of the women. They came in two sections, and took turns, so that each guild received a weekly visit. It was to head a procession of this kind, visiting the bazaars devoted to Monbas handiwork, that Kerœcia and her attendants hurried through the streets.

"See the crowds of children, the priestesses and

the women," said Kerœcia, as they whirled through a circular gateway leading to the bazaar.

"They are waiting for us," exclaimed Ildiko, with a glow of satisfaction and self-importance. "Setos, the wise and kind father, forgive our being tardy," she continued; "we were detained on such loving pretexts as befits the exalted regard felt for our guests." She gave her hand to Alcamayn and bounded lightly to the ground.

"Shame oppresses me sorely for having kept thee waiting," said Kerœcia, as she suffered Orondo to assist her.

"Thy dalliance was slight," he answered gallantly, "and our first concern is for thy pleasure."

"Let us go at once," they all said.

Each one picked up a basket of flowers and followed Kerœcia and Orondo.

It was a pretty sight. The women and children filled every nook and corner of the booths with flowers while the priestesses swung incense up and down the aisles and over the commodities. The men paid their guests compliments, plied them with sweet-meats and were as courteous and considerate as the occasion demanded.

Fathers took occasion to have a little visit with their children; husbands and wives consulted their mutual interests; while lovers contrived to exchange much of the small coin of affection, openly, innocently and with obvious encouragement.

Mingling freely with the crowd, were the vestal virgins, themselves trained by Priestesses of the Sun, in charge of the boys and girls under the age of twelve. These eager little bodies were allowed to

satisfy their curiosity. The vestals tried to explain everything coming under their observation, so that the visit was an object lesson as well as a half-holiday.

Groups of older boys came attended by warrior-priests, who trained them in the art of warfare, after which they were apprenticed to the various guilds, and taught to be skilled in some branch of industry. In many cases, an elder brother or other relative was serving an apprenticeship while a younger boy was still studying warfare. Then, there was a pardonable display of skill and knowledge by the elder, which did not fail to spur the ambition of the younger.

Both sexes were allowed to study picture writing, music or oratory, and there was much friendly rivalry among them.

The guild awards were always those most hotly contested. In this category were prizes for cooking, weaving, basketry, pottery and the care of the sick, which was the prerogative of the women, while all the industries gave encouragement to the apprentice boys in their charge.

CHAPTER TEN

THE FORTUNE THAT WAS TOLD WITH TAROT CARDS

SETOS, the Dogberry of Tlamco, lived in a pretentious square house where the disused Laurel Hill Cemetery is now located. The house was gay in stucco ornament and artistic coloring. The surrounding grounds were extensive, and the rambling enclosure was altogether the most elaborate private establishment in the city.

Quick, active, energetic and scientific, Setos had, also, the cunning of a schemer and the ambition of a dictator. In stature, he was short and pudgy, with a round, fat body and with disproportionately small extremities. He made many gestures with his arms and carried his straight stiff thumbs downward. His finger-nails were narrow, indicating obstinacy and conceit, while his thick and stubby fingers showed that he was cruel and selfish. Setos's eyes were small and gray.

In addition to long ham-like ears was a nose which was a cross between a hook and a beak. The thin lips and square jaws completed a countenance which reflected a bold and uncertain temper. The man had a nervous habit of clasping his coarse, fat hands, especially when excited or over-anxious. Withal, he was inordinately vain, not of his good looks certainly, but of his achievements — and, his godliness.

Akaza had a way of looking straight through Setos's mean, shabby nature which mightily irritated this entirely self-satisfied man. Setos always imagined that he was being put upon in the civic councils, and he was determined that the visitors should imbibe something of his greatness at the fountain-head.

It did not require much diplomacy nor persuasion to induce Kerœcia to pay Ildiko a visit before leaving Tlamco.

"When Eko Tanga says farewell, to-morrow," Setos said to her, "it will save thee embarrassment to spend the remaining days with Ildiko. It would not be politic to take thy leave at the same time, because of the ill-concealed distrust between the Monbas and Eko Tanga. Shouldst thou go immediately after, it would be discourteous to the government of Ian. Let me urge thee strongly to continue here for a time."

"Give me leave to add my prayer to thine, father," said Ildiko, quick to see the importance of the move to herself. With Kerœcia as her guest, she would have the eyes of the whole city on her for a time. "Rahula do persuade our friends to make us happy," she concluded with a pretty, affected lisp.

"I am wholly in thy hands," responded Kerœcia. "Thy request lines with my desires. I am weary of public function. Besides, I am enslaved by curiosity concerning thy mode of living. Thou art not of the Azes."

"Rightly spoken," said Ildiko. "Thou art justified in seeking to know the domestic habits of Tlamco. It is not granted me to read signs like Rahula, but I can see the drift already."

There was nothing malicious in Ildiko. Kerœcia colored quickly, but made no reply.

"Who knows but that I had ulterior motives in asking the fair lady to remain with us?" said Setos, pompously. "I hope for a son-in-law, some day, and Ben Hu Barabe is entirely to my liking."

Ildiko, frivolous and vain, never doubted that she had made an impression in that quarter. A keen eye would have detected the sudden pallor of Alcyesta and the protective movement of Kerœcia. Self-centered Setos did not look at Rahula; therefore, he did not see the swift, half-fearful glance she gave Alcamayn, nor did he note the suppressed excitement of Orondo.

Kerœcia understood that the official character of her visit was at an end, and she experienced a feeling of relief. Setos anticipated this. He knew that the commercial benefits to be derived from a closer association of the two people were yet unrealized, and he did not intend to lose an opportunity to profit by the situation.

Will it jar on the sensibilities to discover that Setos took advantage of, and swindled the Monbas in every transaction following? He did this in order to make a reputation for zeal and shrewdness among his fellow council-men.

It was Friday, the day of the bath, and not long before the time appointed for the departure of the high-priestess. Ildiko, Alcyesta, Mineola and Kerœcia were taking a siesta while deft-fingered maids brushed the hair spread out over their shoulders to dry after hammam and massage. They were seated on cushions piled on the still heated flagging, near the play of a perfumed spray. Their finger tips,

nails and palms had been beautified, and the flat-iron shaped pumice-stone rubber had been industriously applied to the bottom of the feet, until each one was as soft and pliant as a baby's untried sole. Long loose-fitting robes tied at the waist with striped silk, were the only garments worn.

The bathers regaled themselves with an ice-cream water-melon, which had been buried in an artificial snow-bank since early morning. Setos knew how to manufacture ice, but he preferred to follow the custom, long prevalent in Tlamco, of packing the snow in winter and bringing it down from the mountains as needed for daily use. A water jar made of porous clay, and completely covered by a fine growth of timothy grass had been filled with mead and hung in a window where a draught of air played upon it. The Azes believed that a turquoise prevented contagion, and that an emerald had the quality to purify water; so, the patera drinking-cups of silver provided were ornamented with them.

"It nears the fourth hour since we commenced our bath," commented Kerœcia, helping herself to a drink from the ewer. "We have talked about everything I know. Now, what shall we do?"

The daintily carved orange-wood spoon in the hand of each listener was hastily returned to the yellow flesh of the melon, freckled with black seeds, and three pairs of eager eyes focused on the speaker.

"I will tell thee what I should like to do," cried Ildiko. "I should like to talk about love. I intend to marry within a year."

"O—h, dost thou?" they all exclaimed, in a breath. "Hast thou decreed who shall be party to this resolve?"

"Yes — and no. In Atlantis, the parents often select a husband or wife for their children. But one is not compelled to accept their choice," she answered.

"Has a selection been made for thee?" queried Alcyesta.

"Yes. My father and Rahula have partly agreed that I am to marry Alcamayn."

"Oh! Ho!" was all that could be distinguished, as the wooden plates were quickly set aside, and a general readjustment of cushions closed in around Ildiko.

"I am not sure that I am pleased," that young lady went on to say. "I would rather select my husband myself."

"No one of our tribe can do that, except our high-priestess," rejoined Alcyesta. "Does thy religion allow thy priestess such liberty?"

"Truly not. Our priestesses may marry if someone asks them, but they cannot help themselves. Oh, that I were a Monbas high-priestess!"

"What wouldst thou do?" asked Kerœcia, with a smile, while Alcyesta did not seem to breathe.

"I would propose to thy Chancellor, Ben Hu Barabe," she averred.

"Ben Hu Barabe is already betrothed," replied Kerœcia. "He will espouse my beloved Alcyesta, when we return home."

"How fortunate thou art!" said Ildiko to Alcyesta, but slightly abashed. "I can always marry Alcamayn. I should be puzzled to know what to do in thy case," she continued, addressing Kerœcia.

"I fail to see why," answered the priestess.

"There is more than one among the Azes and Atlantians who would speak if he dared."

Kerœcia blushed and looked confused. Alcyesta and Mineola asked in a breath:

"Who are they?"

"Use thine eyes and find out," replied Ildiko. "We have only one marking of the sun-dial for beauty sleep. Then we must array ourselves becomingly for the sake of Orondo, Alcamayn, Hanabusa and Ben Hu Barabe who arrive at the dinner hour."

The high-priestess had arisen in the meantime.

"Not a wink of sleep to put a little rose in thy cheeks and add diamond sparkles to thine eyes?" chattered Ildiko.

"Not this time," declared Kerœcia. "I must away at once as I have promised early audience to one of our friends."

"May the assurances he brings thee be good and comforting," murmured Ildiko, already half-asleep.

"May the Lord of the Lapse of Time enfold thee completely," answered Kerœcia, with a careless nod, as she passed out of the chamber.

Orondo usually stood with his right foot forward, as if on guard, his broad, powerful shoulders thrown back, and his chest well out. In civilian's dress, he wore an agate-headed serpent of scarlet leather around his head. On his neck was a gorget of leather set with gold bosses, from which hung a long, black cloak, bordered with fur. He had on a short apron-like skirt of leather, with a triple row of gold bosses around the bottom, and edged with a heavy leather fringe.

Wrinkled leather buckskins and gold-bossed sandals completed his costume.

Wearing no beard, his straight black hair fell well down over his shoulders. He was a patient, faithful worker, self-reliant, reserved, proud, firm in friendship, but an unrelenting foe. Slow to anger, he was like a bull when aroused.

Orondo's voice in speech and song was mellow and agreeable. A countenance that glowed with animation, added much to his dauntless appearance. It was not like him to parley or waste time in useless subterfuge; but whatever he attempted he went straight about. So, desiring to consult Yermah, he marched into his presence without any preliminaries.

Noting his perturbed manner, the Dorado laid down a brush-pen he was using, and said:

"Something has interrupted the even tenor of thy well-ordered life, Orondo. Can I serve thee?"

There were curious white and red lines on the swarthy face, and the features looked pinched and drawn. He was exceedingly quiet, but there was an unusual brilliancy in the piercing black eyes.

"I have come to ask thy advice and blessing in a matter of great import to me," he finally answered. "The point of superior years counts but little between us; but thou art my chief, and I love thee well."

"Of that I am fully assured. My blessing and good wishes thou hast only to command. Give me to see the matter lying deep in thy heart, that I may judge for thee," replied Yermah, fully aware that a crisis of some kind was at hand.

"Duty demands that I render strict obedience to my superiors, of whom thou art one, and the com-

mand is that I shall take a wife from the native women of this country."

"I had feared from the ominous import of thy manner that some dark deed touching the honor of the state oppressed thy knowledge," quickly responded Yermah, a feeling of relief giving place to his uncomfortable apprehension. "This is a more simple matter."

"Not without thy consent. My heart rebels at the thought of a wife among the Azes," answered Orondo, gravely.

"Then why mis-use desire? There is time enough. Thou hast fewer years than I. Let thy better parts speak, then come to me," said Yermah, rising.

"This situation confronts me," said Orondo, with agitation.

"Unmask thy feeling. I am not fully in confidence. Thou bemoanest the mandate to wed a native, yet affirm thy inner soul bespeaks its mate," replied Yermah, shaking his head and looking perplexed.

"She whom I adore is the high-priestess of the Monbas," said Orondo, scarcely above a whisper.

Yermah dropped into his seat as if he had been shot, and put his hands before his face as if to ward off a blow. Orondo, too much wrought up to detect feeling in another, asked eagerly:

"Thou wilt grant me permission to woo her, and if I win, wilt bless our union?"

"My vow to the Brotherhood forbids any other course. Go, go now, with my blessing, Orondo," Yermah managed to say.

"May the Master of the Radiance shower thee

richly," murmured his auditor, as he stumblingly found his way out.

Yermah sat like a man stunned. For the first time in his life he drank deeply and long at the fountain of pain.

Orondo walked like one in a dream. He was in an exalted frame of mind, and seemed to be carried on the wings of the wind toward the house occupied by Rahula. He had won his first victory. He had permission from his civil chief. Now he would consult the unseen forces; then, he would learn his fate from the lips of his beloved. Hope was holding high carnival, and singing a merry tune in his ear, as he approached the door of the "Divination Room," in the center of the square building.

"An humble applicant stands at thy door, Rahula," called Orondo; "one who begs that thou wilt open to him the secrets of his destiny."

"Upon what pretext dost thou invoke aid of the unseen powers?" demanded Rahula, the reader of the tarot cards, from behind a heavy tapestry curtain. "If of trivial import, begone at once! I will not hear thee."

"Life and love are the subjects of my longing," he answered. "And so urgent is my mission, I would fain discharge any obligation imposed upon me."

Suddenly the heavy bronze bolts in the door flew apart. There was a sliding, grinding sound as the entrance was cleared, and he was across the threshold of the most noted and able professional fortune and story teller of that day.

"Welcome, Orondo. Neither pitch nor accent betrayed thee. The triplicity of mind, heart, and

bodily function are wholly at thy service," said Rahula, coming forward and placing both hands on the upper arms of her visitor, while she lightly brushed his forehead with her lips. He in turn kissed the back and palm of her left hand, thus appealing directly to her intuitional powers.

A pair of bull-headed and eagle-winged sphinxes guarded the north and south side of the square-topped golden tripod, which was supported by twigs of madroña wood, tipped with gold. This consecrated table occupied the middle of the room; and in the mouths of the sphinxes were hooks from which were hung perfumed, jeweled lamps.

In the center of the tripod was a round disk composed of various metals radiating in stripes. On the outer edge of the rim were twenty-four hieroglyphs of magic, at equal distances from each other. A tiled floor liberally spread with rugs and skins, completed the furnishings, save a duplicate stool of black under-glaze with a meander in white around it, which served as a seat for Rahula on the opposite side. The ceiling showed twelve radiations in the folds of colored silk, which started from the central canopy and ended in a frieze of twenty-four enlarged hieroglyphs, interlaced in a dragonesque meander. Pompeiian-red tapestries hung on the walls, relieved by wise sayings painted on banners of silk tissue, which were placed at intervals in perpendicular strips.

Rahula's ample, flowing robes were of purple silk, with a circlet of jet on her head, and a girdle of the same at her waist. Around her neck was a filigree gold and silver collarette fitting close to the skin. From a recess in the wall opposite the door Rahula brought forth the figure of a youth, a young calf,

a lion, an eagle, a dragon, and a dove. These were of Atlantian workmanship, in pure gold and silver, curiously blended, the feathers, hair, clothes and scales being of silver, while the bodies were of gold.

She placed these on the floor on either side of her seat, saying:

"Should thy quest of knowledge pertain to a wife, we must consult the dove," holding the figure in her hand as she spoke.

Orondo bowed. She placed the dove in between the sphinxes, and continued:

"If children crown thy life, the youth must be their champion. Shall we consult him?"

Again Orondo nodded, and the statuette was ranged beside the dove.

"The lion has power and authority in his keeping. This emblem I shall choose for thee." Saying which she stood it in the same row.

"By the dragon thou shalt know thy length of days. Does the outlook satisfy thy desire?"

"Proceed, Rahula, and mayst thou be led by the guardian of the circuit."

The sibyl stood facing Orondo, while balancing a plain gold ring tied with a thread of flax over the ball of her left thumb. As soon as the string was straight, she exclaimed:

"I cry unto Thee who makest time run, and liest in all the mysteries. Hear thy servant!"

Slowly the ring began to describe a tiny circle. Then it swung farther and farther toward Orondo, until it was opposite.

"Propound thy question, but silently," said Rahula, watching the ring, intently.

As if moved by some hidden power, the undula-

ting ring answered his thoughts. The same increase in vibration as before, finally brought the ring in contact with the raised rim sufficiently to make it tinkle like a fairy bell.

"Aila Kar!" chanted Rahula. "Affirm it a third time. One-two-three!" and the ring once more hung motionless over the center of the magic plate.

"Thou standest faint-hearted at the Temple of Love newly erected in thy heart, Orondo," declared Rahula, with a searching glance.

"Yes. And I fain would know if I may enter," said he simply.

"The tarot gives us wisdom here," was her reply, as she returned to the recess, and brought a sandal-wood box filled with small ivory cards. When she drew off the sliding lid, there were three packages, two of which she placed in a flattened disk-shaped basket of fine weave, which divided in two. Each side was furnished with a ring for a handle, and when she had unwound the linen coverings of the cards, she closed it.

"Hold the two rings firmly and shake the basket well," she directed her visitor.

The third package contained the twenty-two keys of Divine Wisdom, and these Rahula shuffled thoroughly, keeping a square of fine linen over her hands in the process.

At the four cardinal points outside the metal disk in the center of the table were: on the north, a square of inlaid topazes; on the east, a similar setting of emeralds; on the south, a duplicate of sapphires; while on the west was a square of rubies. From each of these was a trine — numbered for the yellow, on the yellow disks, 2, 7, 12; on the green, on disks of

green, 3, 8, 9; for the blue, on blue circles, 5, 4, 10; for the red, on red disks, 1, 6, 11. These trines were so interlaced that the rows of numerals made an outside circle, corresponding to the signs of the zodiac.

"Lay the basket on the metal disk," commanded Rahula. "Then I will open the book of fate for thee." Orondo did as he was bidden. Rahula emptied the ivories into her lap, and quickly arranged the cards in order, face upward, without changing their relative positions. When she had taken out the four aces (one representing a blossoming rod — the modern clubs; the second, a royal chalice — the modern diamonds; the third, a sword piercing a crown — ace of swords; and a circle inclosing a lotus-flower — the ace of cups), she handed them to Orondo, and told him to shuffle them well.

"The astral key to arcane knowledge is in thy hands. As thou valuest happiness, let no unclean thought steal in and pollute the fountain-head," solemnly warned the reader of magic, as she invoked the genii of the day and hour.

The signs by which Orondo sought to divine the future, are found to-day in the scepter of Osiris, long the prerogative of kings and emperors. The pontifical staff, the eucharistic chalice, the cross and Divine Host, the patera cup containing the manna, and the dish of offerings were borrowed from the four aces of the ancient tarot and its central disk. These cards were never used for games of chance or for amusement but always for purposes of divination, and they were held sacred.

"Now place the ace of diamonds — the royal

chalice of life — on the ruby square, which corresponds to the principle of motion, action, and will," directed Rahula. "The blossoming rod of the ace of clubs place on the topaz square, which is the trine of power, influence and right. Then cover the emerald square with the ace of cups, the trine of love, service and favor. Lastly, cover the sapphires with the ace of swords, which pierces the crown of physical being, the trine of evil, malice and death."

When the four squares were covered, she continued:

"This forms the quaternary of Life, Power, Love and Affection. Before I place the cards on these trines, tell me what color best pleases thee."

"I am fond of red — and blue, also," returned Orondo.

"Then thou art materialistic and passionate on the one hand, and an idealist on the other. This will keep thee warring with self; and if the former predominates, will tend to weaken the heart-action. What flower dost thou hold sacred?"

"The delicate flax-blossom is a symbol of my love."

"And by this token thy ideal woman must be constant in conjugal fidelity. Excess in this direction leads to jealousy, the very epitome of selfishness. But what flower dost thou love for its own sake?"

"Myrtle, sprig and blossom, are always endeared to me."

"Then thou hast the redeeming grace of brotherly love. Of the three animals — the horse, the dog, the cat — which dost thou like the best?"

"The horse first, and then the dog."

"Which tells me that thou art capable of a noble,

affectionate, and faithful friendship. Trial lies along this line. Give me leave to judge thy antipathies."

"Rats and mice offend me much."

"Upright and fastidious," she murmured. "Nor does thy frank and open nature warm to spiders, nor thy proud spirit willingly tolerate serpents."

"How well thou readest my inner thoughts!" exclaimed Orondo, wonderingly. "Never have these sentiments lent action to my tongue."

"In dreamland what rich spoils assail thy vagrant will?"

"Happiness and joy attend my sleeping ventures."

"A sanguine temperament, normally exercised — a personality which will die hard in the living man, and one which is liable to wreck the body."

She examined both of his hands, minutely — fingers, palms and wrists. Finally she said:

"To three separate warnings must I give voice. The heart is threatened seriously as to feeling and action. Sudden and tempestuous jealousy assail thy future, and the divine spark will not be generous as to years. So much for thine own self. As to outside entities which may mingle and interweave, the tarot must be oracle."

The king of cups represented him who cultivated affection; the king of diamonds, the custodian of wealth, and the proper distribution of it; the king of swords, the inventions and skill of the inquirer; the king of clubs was the significator of all manual labor. The queens were the wives, actual or prospective, in a question concerning men. They were the personalities of the woman herself in a feminine inquiry. The heralds and knaves represented religious and

civic power respectively, while the numbers from two to ten pertained to the personalities.

Orondo watched her eagerly while she placed the cards, face downward on the four trines. When they were all in position she turned over the ace of diamonds, on the western cardinal point of rubies, and then quickly laid those on numbers 1, 6, 11 — in a row. Beginning with number 1, she said:

"This pertains to the present state of time — thy life as it is at this moment. All is well from this point. Number 6 is exalted and grand, as the individual contacts Deity. But in number 11, there are adverse conditions — I can see neither posterity nor extended continuation here."

"Posterity holds nothing for me?" questioned Orondo, concern dominating manner and voice.

"Not as the matter lies. But all the cards are involved in the final reading. Have patience."

She next placed the ace of clubs on the northern point, face upward, and arranged the cards on numbers 2, 7, 12 — as before. Beginning with number 2, directly above the ace, she said:

"This is the place of power, majesty and honor. In such conditions thou standest well. Thou wilt govern Tlamco in future days. A change of place is shown by the covering of number 7. Supreme rule, however, attends it; while in the place of 12, merit and acquired skill stand worthy sponsors to thy desires."

On the eastern point, directly in front of Orondo, she uncovered the emerald, hidden by the ace of clubs, and proceeded to read from number 3 — the place of love, felicity, agreement and delight. What

she saw there was so adverse that she quickly turned over the cards, marking the place of love in service, reception and bounty in which she found some encouragement. Number 9, the place of favor, help and succor were in exceeding doubt.

"What is it?" queried Orondo, impressed by her manner.

"The trine of love is much assailed by disquieting import. So, I pray thee, give me leave to consult the throne of affliction at once, that the whole matter may stand revealed."

"Thou hast my full consent," said Orondo, now intent and eager.

"Swords fall on this trine of opposition, persecution and punishment," exclaimed Rahula. "This portent quickens fear. Number 4, the place of mighty retribution, is not free from evil aspects. Treachery is thy portion in number 5, with malice attendant, while number 10 gives speedy death. Be not wholly convinced by this," she entreated. "Suffer me to assail the doors of Divine Wisdom, substituting the twenty-two keys for the cards."

She scarcely waited for Orondo's nod of assent before she had swept the ivories into their basket, and was busy shuffling and placing the keys around the aces, still face upward. There was an intense silence as she hastily placed the keys on the numbers — first face downward in trines, and then the reverse, with the outward circle completed first. She read from the outward ring toward the center.

"Love and marriage come as thy portion, but not without delay and much suffering. After this, the body sleeps," she said in conclusion.

The cool brisk wind felt refreshing to Orondo's fevered cheeks as he hurried along the streets flooded with afternoon sunlight. The every-day commonplaces of active life about him passed unnoticed in the rapid whirl of his conflicting emotions.

"Fancy claims me for her own," he thought. "Surely there can be no harm in obeying such sweet service as links me to my loved one."

Orondo smiled softly, and as he turned into the broad avenue leading to Iaqua, his serenity was fully reëstablished. He went to his own apartments, and spent much time and labor over his toilet. Finally, when extract and oil, brush and comb had done full justice, he found his way into the smoking-room, where he sought quiet for his nerves in the narcotic effect of a chibouk. Under its soothing influence he indulged in the airiest of day-dreams. As the appointed hour drew near, he repaired to the sanctuary, where he knelt and humbly petitioned Divine Grace to attend his venture.

* * * * * * *

"Father," said Ildiko, as she stood with Setos in the twilight awaiting their dinner-guests, "make no demand for light early to-night. Some unseemly circumstance oppresses the spirit of Kerœcia. She has been weeping."

"Yearning for her own may weigh her down. If so, we have failed to make our welcome speak to her heart. In this we must be more vigilant. H-s-h! Here she is, attended!"

Scarcely had the women found seats when the voices of Hanabusa, Ben Hu Barabe and Alcamayn were heard responding to Setos's greetings in the broad entrance hall.

"Where is Orondo?" asked Alcamayn, as he came toward Kerœcia. "In the street at the last marking of the sun I had speech with him, intent then upon immediate attendance here."

Kerœcia paled visibly, and replied with difficulty:

"Orondo's presence has lately honored me. He begs to absent himself at dinner," she said, turning appealingly to Setos.

"Affairs of urgent moment must have decided him. His convenience and wish dictated the day and hour of our assemblage," rejoined Setos. "May there be no evil import behind this sudden change."

"Has the Dorado been seen to-day?" asked Alcamayn. "Twice I sought him on matters of state, but he was not at Iaqua."

"He rowed out on the bay at an early gnomon, unattended," responded Hanabusa. "Many times I hailed him, but he was unmindful of my presence."

"The cares of his office sat heavily on my shoulders in consequence," said Setos, with a show of assumed irritation.

By judicious complaint many a vain soul betrays its self-importance. Glancing around the room, to see if he had created the desired impression, Setos suddenly bethought him of Ildiko's words. He bustled about for a few moments, and then gave escort to Kerœcia who was glad to escape to the dining-room.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

A REALIZATION OF LOVE WHICH BEGGARED LANGUAGE

ORONDO returned not to Iaqua during the night. He went to a favorite nook in the gardens, the same he had taken such pride in showing to Kerœcia. Here he went over the ground again step by step, and that same pride lay in the dust at his feet grievously wounded. Trifles to which he had attached peculiar significance now seemed to him commonplace politeness.

Orondo could not accuse Kerœcia of playing with him. She had been openly and candidly indifferent. Her effort to shield him, her kindness, were eloquent of her disinterested friendship. He groaned under her sympathy, but he was not without capacity to plan a course of action.

The first watches of the night witnessed his wrestle with overwhelming grief, but as the cool morning hours came on, his thoughts turned to the future. He looked forward eagerly to his departure from Tlamco, which he knew from the beginning he must take. Hope led him to believe that he would have a companion for the exile, which now he gratefully remembered would be a lonely one. He sat motionless upon the curbing which bordered the artificial lake near the perfume-beds, utterly oblivious to their refreshing odors. His thoughts were so painfully

centered that he noted neither the passing hours nor his own bodily discomfort.

Finally, habit warned him that dawn was approaching, and he mechanically roused himself. He knew, without conscious effort, that he must greet the rising sun with composure; therefore he tried to rally his drooping spirits. Still like one in a dream, he removed his cloak and helmet, then washed his hands and face in the clear, cool water of the lake. His benumbed and stiffened nether limbs protested painfully against his essay at walking. He heeded them not. Instinct led him in the direction of Iaqua.

Yermah, too, had passed a sleepless night. He spent the day on the water, floating and drifting with the ebb and flow of the tide, struggling to reconcile himself with the conditions confronting him. At night he came back to Iaqua, but purposely avoided meeting Orondo. Love made him humble, and he did not for a moment doubt the result of Orondo's wooing. He knew that his countryman was a lovable man, and he could not find it in his heart to blame Kerœcia for accepting him. No — Orondo had asked his consent and blessing; he must be willing to give it with all his heart.

How stern and forbidding seemed the face of duty! How hateful the precepts of honor! Yermah censured himself unsparingly. Many times as he paced the apartments, still clad as he came from the bay, he spoke his thoughts aloud. He argued with himself long and earnestly.

"How beautiful, how lovely she is!" Yermah exclaimed for the hundredth time. But he was sick with the thought that she belonged to another. He told himself that he would rather give her to Orondo

than to any one else. But why should she not have loved him? If such affection had blessed his life, he would hasten his appointed task, and then claim his choice for a wife according to law and custom. It would be only a few months to wait. Now what difference did it make? Orondo stood in his place.

How unsatisfactory, how paltry seemed his life work and aims! How completely helpless and discouraged he felt! But he must face the situation like a man. With the rising sun Orondo would come with a beaming countenance to recount his happiness. It would require all his fortitude to do and to say what was expected of him.

Thinking thus, he drew aside the curtains and peered at the sky. The first mingling of pink and gray heralded the coming day. Performing the necessary ablutions, he wrapped his cloak about him and left the house. He did not notice particularly the direction he took, walking rapidly forward, with his head bent in strained attention. Once inside the main entrance to the gardens, he halted, listening for footsteps ahead of him.

For the first time he observed the dew lying on the bent grass in drops separate and distinct from each other, but thickly studding each blade and leaf. Suddenly on the curving pavement a few feet in front of him, stood Orondo, irresolute, stricken and old. He had not yet caught sight of Yermah, but had merely paused in his erratic course, without definite idea whether to proceed or to retreat.

"May truth and love be with thee, Orondo," said the Dorado, in an unsteady tone of voice. "Mayst thou live by them, and by such means triumph over all hindrances."

"The goodness of this place and hour be upon thee," responded Orondo, still not recognizing Yermah.

As the men looked at each other, a family of deer roused themselves under the shelter of a friendly live-oak tree standing in the sward to the right of the pavement. The buck stood up and shook his graceful, spreading horns, until the leaves overhead quivered in the current of air set in motion. The doe licked the side of one fawn, while the other spotted creature wrinkled up its little nose, took a sniff of fresh air, and clicked its hoofs together in the very exuberance and joy of living.

The two heavy-hearted men gazed at one another in an embarrassed silence. Finally, Orondo said:

"I have seen the priestess Kerœcia."

"And — she?" Yermah finished the sentence with a supplicating movement and braced himself for the shock.

"She — she is not for me," responded Orondo, brokenly.

Not to have saved his immortal soul, could Yermah control the wave of emotion which swept over him, making him stagger like a drunken man. The revulsion of feeling was so strong that he put out his hand to steady himself, while his senses fairly reeled.

Like a flash the truth dawned on Orondo; but he would have suffered his tongue cut out rather than acknowledge even to himself what he had seen. Profound pity moved him, and under its influence he threw himself on his knees before the Dorado.

"Give me leave," he cried, "to take men and flocks and go into the valley of the Mississippi, to

begin mound-building. My mission in Tlamco is finished."

"Stand equally with me," exclaimed Yermah, assisting Orondo to rise and embracing him. "A solemn covenant binds thee to that task. Consult only thine own pleasure and convenience." Then, after a pause, "I shall miss thy strong, right hand, thy faithful heart and welcome presence here."

The dawn, bright from the Orient couch, had chased away the stars, and as Yermah spoke a golden ring came slowly above the horizon. The bells in the temples and Observatory chimed inspiringly. Nature was astir all about them, while the entire city was at devotion. With bared heads both men turned their pale faces toward the east. Yermah's arm lay affectionately on Orondo's shoulder.

"Homage to Thee who risest above the horizon," said the Dorado, reverently. "I come near to Thee. Thou openest the gates of another day."

"Om-ah!" responded Orondo, who continued: "Great Illuminator out of the golden, place thyself as a protector behind me. I open to thee."

"Om-ah!" said Yermah, as they both stretched out their arms and bowed three times to the now fully risen sun.

* * * * * * *

It was the day following Orondo's visit, and Kerœcia was disturbed, downcast and depressed. For the first time since her entrance to Tlamco she longed for the mountain fastnesses of the Monbas. She felt stifled. She wanted air, breath, room. A sense of utter loneliness was upon her. Again she could have cried bitter tears for Orondo. It was agony to her soul to know that she had hurt him.

The surprise of it — the pity of it! The reflex action of her hours of unalloyed pleasure was full upon her.

So she stood under the moonless sky, while the clouds scurried overhead in a pell-mell race with the incoming fog. She was chilled at heart, and instinctively sought a sheltered nook, where she felt she could be absolutely alone.

Kerœcia remained for some time motionless, frowning into vacancy, so preoccupied that she did not notice a tiny moon-shaped boat of paper zigzagging its way down the narrow waterway at her feet. It might have passed her had not the splash of a pebble thrown a spray of water on her skirts. Glancing quickly about her, she advanced toward the wavering craft in time to rescue a red velvet rose floating loosely in a cluster of feathery ferns.

She tucked the flower and its greenery into her corsage and made them fast, but not before she had inhaled their fragrance and noticed their beauty. Then she examined the neatly folded parchment. Across the prow was the word "Yermah." At the sight of his name, happiness surged through every avenue of sensibility like rare old wine. Kerœcia's face was all tenderness as she pressed her lips to the writing.

It was a lingering, cooing movement, such as women who love employ.

Yermah had been watching her through a tapestry of vines, leaves and blossoms. In the interim his hopes ran as high as her spirits had been somber and low. He shook the branches of the hedge and stamped with his foot; but she was too much absorbed to hear him.

At last he contrived to make her know that he was near.

He had left home with the mere desire of seeing her, and with no intention of speaking. But when he saw her kiss his name, it was the eager impulse and bound of impassioned love which brought him to her side. His hungry eyes drove him there for sight of her. Now his hungrier heart demanded more. The same impulse impelling him forward controlled his further action.

Kerœcia made no resistance when he caught her in his arms, nor did she deny him when his lips sought hers, insistent and clinging. Each soul claimed its own. Each organism responded to its counter exhilaration. . . . Love beggared language . . . It was well.

Neither had voice nor speech, as by common impulse they drew apart and hurried away in opposite directions. Yermah dared not trust himself to look back, while Kerœcia groped her way into the house and hid in her own room, safe from human eye.

"Men kiss like women," she murmured naïvely, and in a surprised tone. "Their lips are the same, but—" Then she buried her face in her hands while a hot blush burned its way to the roots of her hair. Her cheeks still tingled with the light sweep of mustache and beard, and she fell to wondering if she could see the kiss as plainly as she still felt it. Those dear arms! How strong and masterful their protecting enfoldment! . . . The perfume of the crushed and broken rose brought her back to reality. She unfastened it, and buried her mouth in its petals, so close that a drop of blood spread itself

over her white teeth. Presently she wiped her lips with a dainty bit of linen.

"Sealed in blood!" she exclaimed, as she examined it. "And nothing but heart's blood can ever sever the bond. Oh, Yermah, my hero, my king! I love thee!"

The Dorado hurried through the streets with his senses in a whirl, and then entered Iaqua by a private gate. He did not pause until he threw himself on his knees before the statue of Orion. The soft light of incense-tapers and jeweled lamps revealed the pallor of his countenance. Too agitated to attempt prayer, he nervously held his hands to his head, and tried to collect his thoughts — to control his emotions.

"Oh, truant and coward that I am!" he exclaimed. "Why could I not speak the words my heart is bursting to tell? Will she know how sincerely, how devotedly I love her?"

He threw off his cloak, pushed his helmet on the floor, and wiped the perspiration from his brow.

"What a lovely creature a woman is! I can feel her soft, yielding body yet — her warm breath and sweet lips. No wonder I could not speak! Will her thought accuse me? And her dear, little hands! — I could crush them easily."

Then, as if suspicion crossed his mind, he upbraided himself for ungentleness.

"Did my roughness hurt her? Did I frighten her by my suddenness? . . . So this is love! . . . And I not know how to express what I feel! Why has not Akaza taught me? . . . I see — I see — no one can teach another! I must learn

for myself. . . . This is why the sages say it is like subtle poison. My blood is on fire! I do not know myself — my ugly self!" he added, as he arose and peered at his reflection in the mirrored wall.

Never before had he been dissatisfied with what he saw. It was his first realization of self-consciousness, and he was full of the humility of a master passion.

"Her hair fell here over my arm," he continued, smiling tenderly. "I sense it yet. The perfume of it is sweet to my nostrils. Why did I not beg a lock for remembrance?"

He paced the floor restlessly.

"How unmanned and undone I am! Oh, my Kerœcia! Thy first kiss has enslaved me! I could not see the luster of thine eyes, but I could feel thy love. I can look into thy heart. Surely thou canst see that mine is filled with thy dear image . . . I loved my mother, and Akaza, too . . . but this is love of another kind! . . . If my mate should deny herself to me! No, no, no! I cannot live without her! . . . Poor Orondo! Poor soul!" he cried, in accents which revealed his great sympathy.

It was not until long after, that Yermah quit the chamber and finally sought rest.

CHAPTER TWELVE

"A BROTHERHOOD VOW BINDS THE SOUL!"

"HOLD the burning feathers close under his nose," directed the chief shaman, who had been hastily summoned to Iaqua, when Orondo was found in an unconscious condition early the following morning after his adventure with Yermah in the public gardens. "We will soon determine whether it is merely a fainting fit or of more serious import."

The pungent and penetrating odors produced no effect except to cause the sufferer to turn his head and moan.

"Delirium chains his physical senses," said the shaman, when Orondo opened his eyes without recognizing any one.

In their own peculiar fashion, the chief and his two assistants examined the seven principal organs of the body — the same that are symbolized by the curls of Medusa, and whose appetites must be controlled before there can be health either on the physical or the mental planes.

"Extreme heat, and a labored and painful drawing in of the breath is here," said the chief, while one assistant carefully wrote down his words.

It was compulsory upon healers to post in a conspicuous place on the temple walls to which they were attached the number of cures made, and by

what processes. Orondo being a civic leader, the law required that his malady should be written on the tablet back of the Chief Councilor's chair in the Temple of the Sun.

"Pains in all the bones, and in the cords which give them motion," he continued. "The air-bellows rise and fall one-half, and the hammer in the left breast moves slowly and is very weak. Lend a hand."

The scribe hastily put down his parchment and assisted in placing Orondo in a hammock, hung in the full glare of the sun, in a circular, glass-sided room. The sick man was quickly stripped to the waist, and the shamans took turns in holding first a large red convex lens over the region of the heart and lungs; then an orange-colored one; and finally a yellow-green ray of light was concentrated over the heart, to stimulate its retarded action. This process will be recognized as the forerunner of the modern X-Ray.

Then by what is now known as the Swedish movement, they went over the entire body, keeping the lenses focused on the parts being kneaded and rubbed. When this treatment ceased, they carried him back to his wall-pallet, taking care to lay his head to the north, thus taking advantage of the magnetic currents.

A small oblong bit of copper was placed in an olla of snow-water. It was fastened by a silken-cord to a copper anklet clasped above the patient's left foot. Over the main artery was a small disk of copper with Orondo's seal on the outside.

"Squeeze the sponge gently, and slip it under the signet," directed the head physician.

Believing that the topaz exercised a powerful influence over an afflicted mind, the shaman rubbed a necklace of these stones briskly between his hands, and put it around Orondo's neck. For the first half-hour the fever increased, and then Orondo raved incessantly:

"Love denies dominion in my heart! . . . Not for thee, Orondo! She makes no return! . . . A Brotherhood vow binds the soul! . . . No, no, no, poor man! . . . Help him, All-Powerful One!"

The chief shaman put some water into hollow glass vessels formed like double convex chromo-lenses, and hung them in the sunlight. These were labeled according as they were yellow, blue, red, or violet-colored.

Later an attendant poured a few drops of aconite tincture into a blue glass bowl, and, mixing it with some water from the blue chromo-lens, gave Orondo some of it to drink. It was known that pure water under the chemical action of the blue rays of sunlight was a cooling, soothing nervine, and that it would greatly assist the bluish herb in reducing inflammation and temperature.

While Orondo slept a silver chafing-dish was brought into the room, and a decoction of dandelion was slowly simmered in water from the ambero, or yellow lens. The remainder of the water was mixed with equal parts of maguey spirits.

Induction belongs to the dominion of inanimate nature, to the magnetic, or cold; while deduction is the ruling force of animation or heat. To assist in producing reaction, the magnet already referred to, was fastened to the body, or hot pole, and immersed

in snow for a cold pole, in order to oxygenize the blood.

During the sleeping hours this force worked steadily in conjunction with other remedies, and when Orondo awoke in the afternoon, he was rational and without fever. Noting his condition, the magnet was removed, and the patient lifted once more into the hammock, where he was thoroughly sponged with alcohol and water. After this, his throat, chest, and shoulders were vigorously rubbed with warm olive oil, perfumed with lavender. The odors of plants are antiseptic, and were much employed in sick rooms by the ancients.

While the physicians were busy, the tamanes in attendance changed the pallet and linen completely. Placing Orondo in it again and setting a lavender spray in motion near the window, they retired to bring in a lacquered tray of food. Freshly baked tortillas, young leeks, and pickled olives, with salted almonds and dried figs formed the principal part of the meal, while a dish of fresh cocoanut and oranges, sliced together, served for dessert.

The tray and dishes had scarcely been removed before Setos came bustling in. Sanitation was his hobby, and he was always urging the necessity for legislation against disease, which he considered was the result of criminal carelessness.

In Tlamco every bit of refuse was carefully collected and burned each day. A large section of the water-front, where the prevailing winds carried the smoke and odor well out to sea, was reserved for this purpose. The flood-gates of the entire water system were opened during certain hours of the night and all the waste canals cleansed thoroughly.

"By Him who is the breath of every living thing, tell me how affliction befell thee?" asked Setos, sitting down on the bed near the foot and searching Orondo's face anxiously.

"By the only method possible," answered Orondo. "Because I have violated the laws of harmony."

"This is bad, very bad! It gives less favored men an excuse to neglect their bodies in an unwarrantable manner," said Setos, warming up to his favorite theme. "If we could only send out an army to teach the people the possibilities of water, the difference between good and bad food, the necessity for proper rest, the inexorableness of natural laws, disease would become what it was intended to be — a brief, infrequent, reparative process."

He pursed up his lips and sniffed loudly in self-satisfaction. It was so seldom that he had an opportunity to fittingly repeat this homily.

"I think that our laws are strictly and justly administered in this respect," ventured Orondo. "The advocates and healers are supported by the state. Self-interest prompts the latter to report disease as they find it. They know enough of law to name the penalty attached to hereditary and contagious diseases. The advocates know enough of healing to detect symptoms of forbidden maladies. It is a capital offense for either party to conceal conditions of this kind. I do not see what more can be done."

Utter weariness closed Orondo's eyes for a moment, and Setos refrained from further speech.

"Let kindness of heart prompt thee to fill a pipe for me," said the patient, presently.

When it was handed to him, he said with a wan smile:

"Let us indulge our nerves with a harmless sedative as a step in the right direction. I shall wait until thy bowl is filled."

Setos hastened to comply, and after the first three whiffs, which were always silent fire-offerings, said:

"Ildiko refuses to be comforted because of thy continued absence from our house. She grieves for thy affliction, and sends her best thoughts."

"Beauty and goodness are the crown of fair Ildiko. It is not possible for me to do more than receive such flattering unction. I am indeed undone," he made answer, catching his breath painfully.

"The priestess Kerœcia, and her sweet maids are much concerned for thy misfortune. Hanabusa has already been twice to hear if reason came back to thee."

"I pray thee leave me," cried Orondo, piteously. "My heart!" he gasped, as the chief shaman bent over him hurriedly, in response to Setos's call.

"All matters of importance must rest while this man regains control of his better physique," said the shaman, authoritatively. "It were cruel to tax him at this time."

"Nothing except friendly greeting passed between us," declared Setos, much exercised at the sudden bad turn apparent in Orondo.

"I will come again at nightfall," he said.

"Be thou content with inquiry, only," returned the shaman, still frowning over the complete undoing of all his labor.

"The sun must be on the earth's magnetic merid-

ian before quiet will come again to our patient," said the chief shaman, as he prepared to go out for an airing, after working over Orondo for one hour.

"The sun will not be below the horizon until the seventh marking of the gnomon, and until that time we can only wait and watch," he said, in answer to Yermah's anxious question. "Setos has injured his rest greatly, but he has asked for thee more than once. If thou wilt exercise caution, thou mayst go to him."

"I understand Orondo," replied Yermah. "I have stayed away because I feared to excite him. I am glad that I may see him."

Yermah came quietly and put his hand on Orondo's head. He knew how to still the throbbing, uncontrolled emotion dividing the sick man's mental and physical self. Without a word, he willed him peace, and after a time Orondo opened his eyes and seemed to breathe easier.

"The Master of the Hidden Spheres, who causes the principles to arise, give thee peace, Orondo."

Orondo made no reply; his lips quivered and his eyes filled. Yermah took both his hands, and, looking at him steadily, said:

"Part of thy burden falls upon me. I will share physical pain with thee."

Soon the veins in Yermah's hands, and then those in his forehead, stood out like whip-cords. He experienced the same difficulty in breathing, the same spasmodic action of the heart, as had Orondo. He sighed deeply, and it was soon apparent that Orondo's nervous tension was relieved. In the silence which followed both were busy with the same thoughts.

"When does she go?" Orondo asked, finally.

"The day following to-morrow."

"Hast thou seen her since?"

"Once only. I have not had speech with her."

"Twice has she sent to ask after me."

"Which newly affirms the gentleness of her nature."

The situation was trying for Yermah, but he humored his companion, as he saw that speech was a relief to him. He did not suspect Orondo of knowing that he, too, loved Kerœcia.

"When strength comes again, I must consider the work before me," said Orondo, after an eloquent silence. "Duty lays a stern hand on both of us."

"The shamans will cause public complaint if I indulge thee in that direction," said Yermah. "A sharp reprimand rewarded Setos for his effort in that line."

"Setos said nothing to me of that matter," said Orondo, in surprise.

"But he said that to thee which taxed thy powers of control, and for this reason he is forbidden to see thee again, to-day. Dost thou wish me to have a similar experience?"

"The shamans will see that thou hast greatly aided me," said Orondo, as the chief shaman came to his bedside accompanied by Akaza.

"The twilight hour approaches, and I have come to worship with thee," said the hierophant, making the sign of benediction over Orondo. Turning to Yermah, he said:

"The Father of the Beginnings have thee in safe keeping."

"The same rich blessing follow thee," responded Yermah, as he took leave.

The principle of Life is alchemical. The chemical elements must be absorbed in order to give health. As making alchemical gold was really finding the Perfect Way, so the elixir of life is the proper use of the astral light composing the photosphere surrounding our physical bodies.

When the astral body is charged with oil, and the physical body is well supplied with electricity, the secret of magnetism is revealed. The gypsies are the only people who have preserved the knowledge necessary to produce this peculiar chemicalization.

The arrow shot by Orion, William Tell and others, is Thought, the Sagitur; the same as Heracles shot at Helios. The ability of the individual to project thought determines the possession of occult power. This force is gained by harmonizing the physical, mental and spiritual attributes, so that thought may function from any one of these planes. In other words, it is to have complete possession of all these faculties.

To project thought, is literally hitting the bull's eye, as Orion did when he killed Taurus — the astronomical aspect of the world-old battle between the higher and the lower self.

The liberty which the original William Tell sought to achieve was not political, but a victory over his own lower nature — a battle which the men and women of Tlamco fought out in every phase.

"The water-holding capacity of the nerve-cells is much impaired," said the chief shaman to his as-

sistants, when giving directions for the night. "Nervous irritability follows. Sleep will be light and infrequent. Watch beside him. At every third marking let him sip liberally from the ambero lens. Between times, give him drink from the purpuro flagon."

In company with Akaza, he left Iaqua.

It was as the chief shaman had predicted. Orondo failed to find refreshment in troubled sleep, so that the gray, foggy morning found him correspondingly wearied and depressed. Symptoms of pleuro-pneumonia were clearly established, and for three days he had a hard fight for life.

Finally, when well enough to dress himself, he resolutely put on the same clothes he had used such care in selecting for his memorable visit to Kerœcia. It tried him severely to reinvest himself with them, but this was in keeping with his stern resolution to crush out useless regret. He wisely concluded that the easiest way out of it was to accustom himself to the same routine as before. He must not yield to such weakness as to shrink from inanimate things which were associated with her memory.

Some carefully pressed blossoms of flax, fragile, delicate, little bluecups, dedicated in thought to his love, were the only mementos he kept. These he hid away in an ivory dice-box given him by Ben Hu Barabe on taking leave.

Orondo had managed to listen to the words of greeting and farewell from Kerœcia, and had responded thereto manfully. What the effort cost him may be inferred from the fact that he kept his room closely for the week following, refusing to see any one save the tamanes who served him.

When he came again among his fellows, there was a stern, set look on his face, which was accentuated by the sunken eyes and sharpened cheek-bones, but there was no alteration in his manner of life. He began preparation for immediate departure.

Yermah lived in a rose-colored world of his own creation. He made pretty speeches to imaginary women, and never even in sleep lost the consciousness of Kerœcia's presence. In his audience chamber during the day, he granted requests for her. His decisions were all for her benefit, and the directions for various public works were delivered as he fondly imagined he would do if she were present. Several times in affixing his signature to documents he came near to writing her name.

Yermah was singularly absent-minded, with all his amiability and politeness. He went among his pets with the air of a lover, and was entirely oblivious to the screech of the parrots and monkeys in and around the stables. He got on famously with Cibolo; and if the horse had understood him, he would have made a clean breast of the situation.

It would have been such a relief to talk about her.

The Dorado usually had dressed well, as became a man of his station; but now he was fussy and particular to a noticeable degree. He taxed Alcamayn's ingenuity to the utmost in devising suitable gifts for Kerœcia and her attendants, and insisted upon superintending the enameling of the medallion-shaped mirror which he was to present to the priestess. The bits of blue, green, and black enamel must be as shiny and lustrous as the gems they surrounded, and the burnished gold rim and handle must be as fine as the skill of his workmen could make it.

This exchange of mirrors was a pretty compliment among the rulers of olden times — for by this flattering method each was assured of the faithful remembrance of the other. They had but to look into the mirror to discover the subject of the other's thought — at least in theory.

An oval of burnished bronze, framed in silver filigree, enameled with black and white, and set with turquoise, coral, moonstones, and amethysts was the regulation gift from Kerœcia. It was mannish enough to suit the requirements, but it was too formal to express her feelings.

She made a strawberry of red cloth, and with fine brown floss dexterously worked in the seed specks. It was filled with fine sand and grains of musk. The little cup was cleverly imitated by green cloth, and the berry was fastened by a tiny eyelet to a piece of narrow red cord.

Consideration for Orondo, constrained Yermah's impatience to seek Kerœcia immediately, and the preparations for her departure were of such public character that he had no further opportunity of seeing her alone, until his chariot stood before the door of Setos's house, waiting for her.

Cibolo and his three companions tugged hard at their bridles, as a consequence of ten days' idleness. They would have enjoyed kicking up their heels and running like the wind, especially when music, noise and confusion gave such warrant; but Yermah kept a vise-like grip on them, quieting them by a word now and then.

Kerœcia's pride found complete satisfaction in his excellent horsemanship. There were no gloves on his strong, white hands, wound up in the reins, but

the wrists were as firm and hard as steel. It was a master-hand that held the lines, and she was not in the least distressed or alarmed when the horses reared and plunged and stood on their hind feet.

The couple were nearing the round-house on the upper limit of the canal, and Yermah's face was set and pale. He had suddenly forgotten all the pretty speeches he had intended to make. Finally, when there was not a minute to spare, he turned to Kerœcia with an agonized expression and tried to speak. His lips moved, but no sound escaped them, as they fashioned the words: "I love thee!"

That was all he could remember to say, and he was dismayed when he realized that his voice had failed him.

His eyes swam, and he instinctively clutched at his heart as he swayed from side to side.

Kerœcia moved nearer to him helpfully, and with a smile of infinite tenderness slipped her hand into his. For a moment he did not return its pressure; then it seemed to nestle close to his palm, and, with a caressing touch, left something in his grasp when it was withdrawn. When he opened his hand he found the little strawberry.

"With all my heart," she said in a whisper. He kissed the keepsake rapturously, and slipped it into a fold of his tunic in time to assist her to alight from the chariot. Etiquette forbade his accompanying her farther.

With straining eyes he stood watching and waving his hand to her, until the balsas put into the bay.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

"When from the shores
And forest-nestling mountains came a voice
That, solemn sounding, bids the world prepare!"

THE sphinx, one of the first symbols known to man, demands that we solve its riddle — which is Life, not Death. The Egyptian sphinxes with their human heads face the West. The mastodon-headed sphinxes of Mexico face the East. Will future research unearth the evidence necessary to locate the sunken Atlantis lying between these two avenues of sphinxes, and thus reveal the origin of man? Did the primitive races evolve similar civilization separately, or were they all from one source? Perhaps the answer to this, is the solution of the enigma.

Akaza, meaning "God within thee" was the hierophant, prophet and high-priest of the Brotherhood of the White Star, which had its origin in Atlantis. His was an equilibrated, evenly balanced mind and nature. As an initiate he knew all that transpired on the subjective as well as on the positive planes of consciousness. He was always a disturbing element on the shallow, false and artificial side of life. He cared nothing for consequences. A natural wanderer on the face of the earth, Akaza was in his element when it came time for him to lead Yermah's band away from the doomed island.

Akaza was waiting for Yermah this Monday morning, or Moon's day. He stood at the entrance of a cave extending well back under Sutro Heights. It was called Ingharep at that time, and marked the orbit of Uranus — from the center of Tlamco — the planet which was correlated to Akaza's life.

In the time of our story the water's edge did not extend inside Seal Rocks. A careful inspection at low tide to-day will lead to the discovery of the cave still tunneled back under the Cliff House foundation.

The Indians never fail to locate a cavern. Where one is suspected, they wait until after sunset on a windy day. Then they lie down over the supposed cave, and with an ear pressed close to the ground, listen attentively for the roar, such as is heard in a sea-shell. If once this roar is heard, they refuse to search further, experience teaching them that they have found the right spot. Such was the method employed in discovering Ingharep.

Akaza, the hierophant, was an interesting part of the picture as he stood at the mouth of this cavern. The white robe which he wore was made of paca wool, stiff and lustrous as silk, but thick and warm. It was embroidered with five-pointed and six-pointed silver stars, having diamonds in the center. On his thumb was a silver signet-ring. He wore bracelets of the same metal. At his waist was a sash of yellow silk, with double-key pattern outlined in silver. Over his shoulders was a purple cloth mantle, trimmed with a coarse blue tracery in lace pattern.

The mouth of the cave faced due west, thus enabling Akaza to see the last glimmerings of daylight go out as the sun dropped, apparently, into the ocean

or was swallowed up in the vaporous clouds or fog-banks each day. For many months Akaza had watched this process, and, since his return from the Yo-Semite, he had busied himself incessantly with astronomical calculations.

"Pause here a moment," he said to Yermah, after a hearty greeting. "One of the grandest symbols in nature stretches out before thee. Primordial substance is always represented by water flowing out of naught, or nothing."

He pointed toward the wide Pacific and looked at Yermah with a rapt expression. "As it flows, it gradually solidifies into mind, just as the earth was molten and then became solid."

Yermah stood inhaling the stiffening sea-breeze, and watching the waves cresting shoreward in ceaseless motion.

"These waves scudding before the wind are exactly like our thoughts driven to a given point by force of will. It is to give further instruction on this matter of a fully controlled will that I have asked thee to give me attention to-day," continued the old man, as he led the way into the cavern.

There were swinging lamps, and a wide, open fireplace, so constructed that the smoke was emitted through a pointed-arch opening. With the charcoal fire and the swinging lamps, the interior was made quite comfortable. The stalactites, white and frosted, or discolored here and there from natural causes, made the walls and ceilings beautiful. Where an opening suggested partition, blankets, rugs and tapestries had been hung, and over the sanded floor were rush and grass mats in profusion.

Around to the north, where the rocks still stand, the seals barked and roared as they do now, while the same species of birds came and went.

An ingeniously arranged partial closing of heavy boards screened the occupants from the wind, but did not exclude the sunlight and fresh air.

"This eight-spoked wheel represents the life of an initiate," said Akaza.

A round inlaid ivory wheel, supported by a porcelain tripod, was indicated. On its outer edge were the signs of the zodiac, chased in black, with a mother-of-pearl inlaying to indicate the spokes. A rough-edged parchment lay in the center, and Yermah's quick eye saw that it was an orrery question, pertaining to Atlantis, drawn in colors.

"We are not to examine the horoscope at present," explained Akaza, following Yermah's gaze. "I brought thee in here to make sure of fire and the needs of the inner man. Now that they are secure, we shall devote the morning to the beach."

He occupied himself for a few moments with the baskets of food, done up with paper napery, ready for the ever present chafing-dish and samovar. He banked the fire so that it would smolder without dying out, and then the two men went slowly toward the beach where old ocean came in uproariously, and sullenly ground its white teeth on the sands.

Yermah considerately took the ocean side, so as to protect Akaza as much as possible from the cool wind. He drew a thin, bony hand up under his cloak and clasped it close to his side with the upper arm.

They were an interesting study — these two men. One the perfect embodiment of physical health and

strength; the other, feeble in body, but a veritable giant of spiritual force.

The one man stood absolutely apart from temporal things; the other was just beginning to live on the sensuous, or material plane. As they walked they left odd-looking wet tracks behind them.

"Thou knowest already," said Akaza, "that thou hast successfully performed seven of the great labors in the self-development of Osiris. Now thou standest face to face with that which hinders; and it is necessary that I should explain to thee the purport of this eighth labor."

"Is there something about it which I do not understand?" asked Yermah, in a surprised tone. "I have but to find the treasure hidden in the rocks, and then I am ready to return home. I have learned to fashion the gold which is to tip the spires of my temple, and when this is done I shall demand release from my vow. As soon as the Brotherhood receives me, I am free." Then, with a slight hesitation in manner and speech —"I have already decided what I shall do with my freedom."

While he was speaking, Akaza moved and breathed like a person in pain.

"What I must explain to thee is the duality of thine own nature," he went on, turning sadly toward Yermah, "the dual aspect of the labor thou hast already performed, and what thou must do in the future. First, then, Osiris is thyself — the I-am-I principle within thee, which is the same first, last, and all the time. Thy labor is the finding of the Perfect Way. Love is the consummation, and Wisdom is the way."

"What wouldst thou have me do?" asked Yermah, eagerly.

"First, I would have thee realize the transitory nature of life, and its desires, not on the intellectual plane, but as a fact in nature. The body, scientifically considered, is not the same through the whole life. Neither does the mind remain the same. Man's ability to look at his own desires and feelings impersonally is the beginning of Wisdom. No man can extricate himself from the result of his own deeds."

"Give me to know this mystery."

"To bind the sweet influence of the Pleiades is the opposite of loosing the belt of Orion," answered Akaza.

"It has not been granted me to know the significance of either," responded Yermah, humbly.

"Alcyone, the central sun around which the spiral galaxy of the firmament encompassed in the Milky Way, and all the stars, suns and planets included in that circle, are revolving in the only one of the seven sisters whose love is mortal. From out that center issues evermore a ray of the divine creative spirit, coalescing into the life of animate nature here.

"The adept gathers the component parts of that incomprehensible being — man — to his divine center," Akaza continued. "He wills them into the being of another, and that other becomes the mother of a son, given from the depths of space. Such a son art thou, Yermah."

"And thou art in very truth my father?" asked Yermah, wonderingly.

"Yes. For this cause am I in the flesh, and for this, also, must I remain in the body, until thou art restored to the Brotherhood. I am the hierophant, the second in power in our order. So it was granted to me to create an entity which should rule the future as Atlantis rules the present."

"Tell me all of my beginning. How and why this should be. Thou wert an old man when I was born; and thou art a vowed celibate?"

"Swear by Him who made us that thou wilt not reveal what I am about to unfold."

He held up a six-pointed diamond star which blazed on his bosom for the Dorado to kiss, as they stood facing each other. As Yermah's lips touched the center, he turned to the east, and, with both hands clasped over his head, said solemnly:

"I swear."

"A priest of our order, under the same tutelage as Orondo, was thy literal father, while thy mother was a vestal selected from the Temple of Venus. Thy great-grandfather, grandfather and father were of the priesthood, and their wives were selected vestals. To the prophet, hierophant and high-priest was the divine self confided, and we were pledged to produce a ruler for this generation. We willed the conditions which gave thee birth and I must share thy joys and sorrows until such time as the Brotherhood releases me."

"Then I am not of royal lineage — am not the son of Poseidon, Servitor of Atlantis?" There was pain and disappointment in Yermah's voice.

"Thou art royal in the highest and best sense. Thou art immaculately conceived, as is the sun by the cosmic virgin, when he has been standing still

in Capricornus. It is said everywhere that a dew-drop fell on thy virgin mother's bosom, as she lay asleep in a sacred grove. Such was thy beginning."

"Then he to whom I have rendered obedience is not in any sense my father?"

"No. Thou art a veritable sun-god, destined to be thrice born in this life."

"Oh! Akaza, why speakest thou in riddles? Thrice born, indeed! How is it possible without death and re-birth?"

Akaza smiled at his impatience.

"I charged thee in the beginning to remember that there is a dual meaning to all labors that a candidate for the initiation must perform. Thou hast already had two births in this body, and art facing the third."

Yermah could not conceal his astonishment.

"The first birth was at twelve years and six months, when the sex principle began to assert itself. This acme of sensuous existence culminates at twenty-five years, when intellect has its birth and the mind becomes capable of reasoning. Before that time sensation and instinct have served for individual thought. The new rate of vibration set in motion at the birth of desire is the beginning of discord in the personality. Many times before intellect can assert itself the impetus for a plunge to the downward spiral is overwhelmingly strong."

"What, then, befalls the divine self?"

"On the material plane it is the brutalizing process which prevents the divine self from contacting the physical. When this happens the man has really lost his soul. Saturn is the planet correlated to the finding of the Perfect Way. It is the mill

of the gods, which grinds out the imperfections of human nature. The three phases of immaculate conception are closely allied to the three re-births which take place in the physical man."

"Eagerness to master this hidden knowledge proves the quality of fellowship," said Yermah, anxious that Akaza should go fully into details.

"The twelve markings of the zodiac contain the arcane wisdom of our order."

Before Yermah could frame a suitable answer to fit in the pause, Akaza continued:

"The Ineffable One is a trinity of Necessity, Freedom and Love. An ideal is the result of necessity, and all our ideal conceptions are the outcome of our absolute need. It is in the achievement of freedom that the divine within us labors, and on this is based love. Life is the great vineyard of the father, and all his children must toil in it until the end. When in the process of regeneration man is so far perfected as to see the mysterious beauty of his being, he knows that the trials and labors imposed upon him by the laws of cause and effect are at once a necessity and a blessing, and he will no longer seek to escape them.

"There is constant warfare between Desire and Intelligence," the hierophant continued. "Why must thou struggle to overcome? Because the only difference between an imbecile and a genius is the ability of the spirit or divine self to function on the physical plane of the genius and its utter inability to influence the fool. Thine own conduct in this life determines which of these extremes thou wilt become in the next. Atavism and heredity intensify

these tendencies; so does the influence of the planets. But neither the one nor the other can produce them. Thou must do this by the exercise of will power. The union of desire and mind forms the personality. Each attribute is triple — active, passive and equilibrated."

After a slight pause, Akaza went on:

"Thou must wield each triad into a unity. This is real initiation — the consummation of perfect harmony. Thou hast long since gone beyond the reach of impure thoughts emanating from the five sub-human orders of creation. When impure characteristics are removed the first labor is performed. Thy studies and all knowledge received is the second labor, because it prepared thee for esoteric science.

"The power of thought," continued Akaza, "if rightly used, enables a man to transcend creation. Misused, it will cause him to retrograde into the condition where self is the great object of existence, and the appetites of the body are the only deities to whom he sacrifices. For such beings the uprisings of knowledge (the wiles of Circe) glitter with fascinating light, because further knowledge will enable them to minister to their desires. This, my son, is a dangerous situation for an immortal soul. What was intended as a blessing becomes a curse."

"Have I transgressed in this respect?"

"No. Thou art safe on that point."

Knowledge is Circe in Greek — Serket in Egyptian. It is the enchantress, whose realm may be enjoyed by those who know the herb "Moly." This word comes from the same root as the Latin Molo,

and the Swedish Mjoll, to grind, indicating the process of grinding out human passions. It gives the Norse Mjolner, the hammer of Thor, or Will.

The same meaning is implied in the weapon used by Kanza in killing the infants of Desire.

"The abuse of this quality is what brings trouble to our countrymen," said Akaza. "Atlantis is a hotbed of black magic; that is, inverted wisdom. And they must suffer for it. Setos and Rahula are the only devotees of this school we have with us."

"Why didst thou bring them?"

"It was necessary — for thy sake — my beloved. In the performance of the third labor the first hour of the day begins; the two preceding labors being only the dawn of partial wisdom. As knowledge is the fruition of Will — the principle of the second hour of dawn — so Love is the purpose of the Divine Creator. This purpose must subdue its antithesis — the lust for material power and gain."

"If the material body is not kept in a healthy condition, the spirit and the soul cannot be perfected," continued Akaza.

"This is not a fault of mine," returned Yermah, with a touch of pride.

"Thou hast guarded the temple well. The sun never shone on a more perfect physical type. The fifth labor," the hierophant went on, "is equilibrated Will — the caduceus which our order carries and uses as a wand. It is a spear in the hands of an adept, who compels all secrets and who knows all things. It can be developed only by temperance and moderation. It is an unlimited power for good or evil which thou holdest in thy possession. In

thy body it is the solar plexus or brain of the stomach. The twelve plexi around it are the full gamut of physical and spiritual desire. Here thou couldst use thy knowledge with great harm to thy fellows, and more to thyself."

"But why should I?"

"For no reason, unless it be to gratify some wish lying near thy heart. We neither act nor speak, much less decide a question concerning ourselves, except we have a motive."

"My motive is simple enough. Thou hast told me that love is the first triad. I love with all my heart."

"No need of words to assure me of this. I have foreseen it from the first."

"And thou hast not opposed me? Then thou wilt favor it?" The Dorado was as impulsive as a boy.

"I will not oppose it. The great secret of initiation lies in the magnetic warmth of love. It is a threefold principle, the lowest phase of which is sex love. This is the poetry of sensation. It pertains to the material nature, and is therefore impermanent."

"Oh, Akaza! How canst thou say that my love for Kerœcia will pass away. I feel that it never can."

"In the sense of feeling, it certainly will not endure. But this phase of love has three parts. We reach divinity on its upper plane, because it becomes transmuted from animal desire to a soul influx. This will come as a benediction to sweeten the very fountain-head of thy individuality."

"Then I was right in claiming mine own. I have not broken my vow, even in thought," responded Yermah hopefully.

"But thou wilt. In so much as thou wilt imperil immortality thou must suffer. Be of good cheer. Whatever pain may come will soon pass. Nothing of the real love and union between thee will ever cease to be."

"The seventh labor," Akaza continued, after a thoughtful pause, "is the slaying of the vampire of procrastination — the temptation to halt in the path of duty. Thou wilt naturally think thy work completed when thou art allowed to return to Atlantis."

"Why not?"

"Thou wilt not return to Poseidon's kingdom for many days. Atlantis is doomed."

"Akaza, what art thou saying?" In his excitement Yermah shook the hierophant's arm vigorously.

"Thou art forbidden to give to others what thou hast learned. The world needs thee more than thou canst imagine. Thou art now facing the eighth labor of initiation."

"I know this. But is it not true that I shall tip the spires of the temple building? Must I not do this with mine own hands?"

"Thou must subjugate all internal and external hindrances first."

"What is that, if not what I have already mentioned? Was it not so from the beginning? In each colony visited have I not obeyed the laws? This year finishes my sojourn away from Atlantis. Thou wilt remember that I am to have my wish when the last labor has been completed."

"So thou shalt."

"Then I shall have Kerœcia for my wife, and live in peace."

"Thou wilt neither espouse Kerœcia nor live in peace. Marriage to thee is forbidden. Only the commonplace mortal is content to vegetate, procreate and perish." Then after a pause, he added: "Thine is not only race condition, Yermah, but before thou wert born, the Brotherhood decreed it for thee."

"Thou — thou durst tell this to me, the future Servitor of Atlantis and all her dependencies! Out upon thee and thy Brotherhood! I will not submit to thy decrees! Thou — thou hast made me believe in thy love. Is this the language of consideration? The Brotherhood demands all that I value in life! Thou sayest that I have not failed so far. Be assured that I shall succeed finally."

"Thou hast already developed the feminine principle within thee and hast assumed the flowing locks and robe, so that thy fellows may know thou art fit to lead them. My personal tutorship goes no farther. Thy future is distinctly in thine own hands, Yermah." Akaza gave a soft reply, and his rash hot-headed companion was mollified.

"Give thy tongue full license, Akaza. What does the Brotherhood require of its fellows?" Yermah was still the master of Tlamco. His tone and manner betrayed it.

"Absolute freedom must be achieved before the candidate can enter the Gates of Light." Akaza was quiet, but firm.

"Freedom from what?"

"From the enslavement of Desire. Man's perverted love nature is the great stumbling block."

Yermah's face was aflame in an instant. He was furiously angry. He turned toward Akaza with a threatening gesture, while his resentment was at flood tide. Then his arm fell aimlessly to his side. He realized that it was shocking to quarrel with his preceptor — his spiritual father — the man who had unselfishly followed him from one colony to another for the past seven years.

The Dorado held his tongue, but with an impetuous fling of the cloak over his shoulder, he abruptly left the hierophant.

They were on the beach opposite the present life-saving station, and were coming back to the cave. With swift, swinging strides Yermah turned toward Tlamco, and was soon headed for the western gate of its walled enclosure.

"I am not to make my love self-identifying," he muttered savagely. "Am I, then, to love my ideal without desire for possession? He asks what I can not do. I should be no part of a man if I could submit like this! No! A thousand times — no! — I have tasted the wine of life on her sweet lips! — She shall claim a king's ransom in return! — And this, he says, will imperil my soul! — So be it! — This is what love means to me!"

There was that in Yermah which would brook no interference. Docility and obedience, both his habit and inclination, were routed completely by the whirlwind of resentment having control of him. Self made a strong rally, and, for a time, he was intoxicated with the idea of defying Akaza. He gloried in his ability to think and to act for himself. It was *his* happiness, *his* love, and in the future he would do as he pleased. This was instinct

deeper than reason; not conscious lust nor sensuality — for he mentally idealized Kerœcia.

This quality was the same which arouses an animal similarly thwarted to the highest pitch of ferocity. Passion, heretofore a latent force strengthening and sweetening his whole nature, now suddenly flared into tempestuous activity on its own account. Opposition at this juncture would have rendered Yermah capable of murder.

The line of demarcation between the virgin mind and partial realization was forever obliterated. Yermah knew desire. And its demands were all the more urgent because of long-delayed expression.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE VIRGIN EARTH WILL NOT SUBMIT TO MAN'S DEFILEMENT

AKAZA tottered along the shore, shaken and agonized by Yermah's anger. The wind tangled his thin locks, and played sad pranks with the mantle enveloping his body. Sometimes it seemed bent on snapping him in two, and then it almost whipped the life out of him — that life tenure which was feeble and old even when Yermah's generation began.

The tears streamed down his withered cheeks and dripped unheeded from the snow-white beard. His breathing was labored and hard when he arrived at the entrance to the cave, and his slight frame shook with emotion as he turned toward the broad Pacific, seeking to calm his agitation.

He stretched out his hands imploringly to the vast deep spread out before him, as the waves, with a sullen roar, dashed their spray over the rocks at his feet.

"Great God!" he cried in a stricken voice, "My heart bleeds for Yermah. The rays of the sun should make a halo around his dear head.— How hard that there is no real strength except that born of suffering — no enduring experience except it be seared into the heart's core! — I have tried not to attach myself to results; but how can I help it? —

Oh, Amrah! I shall not fail thee! Amenti, thou canst trust me! My oath binds me for all time. This body may succumb in the trial, but I will deliver this trust back to thee as thou art expecting to receive it! — Give me strength to stand by helplessly while Yermah suffers! Oh, Brotherhood, give me the strength to endure!"

He sank down upon a rock from sheer exhaustion and was silent.

For a time there was no sign of life in the bent motionless figure peering far out into space, as if he were seeing the visioned future.

"Oh, woman!" he cried, "Divine part of creative wisdom! — Incarnation of man's ideal of spiritual perfection! When will man recognize in thee the means of reorganizing the world, and place thee on the pedestal of his intellectual greatness! When will he cease to crucify thee on the diverse and conflicting polarity of his passional will? Woman lies a crushed and soiled lily; while man, the victim of vengeance to the powers of nature, wanders a fugitive on the earth, chained to the hell of his depraved imagination — The Great Spirit of Light and Wisdom is to him a tormenting fiend!"

After a time, Akaza went into the cave. The fire had warmed the interior, and the lamps shed a softened glow, which was comforting to the weary old man.

He was hungry, but the food seemed almost to choke him. It had pleased his fancy to have Yermah break bread and eat salt with him in this hidden retreat. In his weakness, he was sorely disappointed, and it cost him an effort to refrain from whimpering childishly.

Akaza awoke with a sudden start from a troubled sleep. It was with difficulty that he made his way to the mouth of the cavern and saw that the sun was hopelessly obscured by what appeared to be a heavy fog. He went back and threw himself down on the cushions and rugs where he had been sleeping, and there he would wait patiently until the time of sunset. If it were possible to get a glimpse of the Lord of Day at that hour, he would go back to the Temple of Neptune, where he lived.

Later, when Akaza was removing the temporary shutters at the entrance to the cave, a gust of wind blew the raindrops into his face. He knew at a glance that it would be a stormy night. The wind was rising, and the lowering, black clouds gave promise of a heavy downpour.

The sun crosses the earth's magnetic meridian twice every twenty-four hours — once at sunrise, and again at sunset.

Akaza made three obeisances toward the west and stood motionless, drinking in the sweet influences of the sunset hour. His lips moved in silent prayer. For several minutes he communed with the subjective world, just coming into its waking activity. The physical world was falling asleep, and with it went the agitating thoughts of the day.

He was renewing his spiritual vigor, listening to the Voice of the Silence, holding converse with his own soul. As he took counsel of his higher self, the bells of the Observatory tower in Tlamco sounded like a silvery-tinkling seashell, faint but distinct to his clairaudient ear.

"Peace! peace! peace!" they seemed to say, while the lines of care slowly relaxed, and the face

of the devotee was as serene and calm as a May morning.

The fireplace and entrance to the cave were so arranged that it was easy to produce a draught; so, when Akaza renewed by meditation and prayer, returned to the fire, the atmosphere surrounding him was fresh and pure. He made the door fast and prepared to remain for the night, for it would tax his physical strength too much to walk back to Tlamco in the storm. As familiar objects outside seemed to be swallowed up in a black pit, he drew a stool up beside the zodiacal wheel in the center of the living-room, and by the light of a lowered lamp began to carefully compare and compute the bearings of the planets and houses of the horoscope before him. Presently he looked up and listened intently. Could it be that he heard some one calling him? Was it an unseen entity, or was it the wind shrieking through the crevices about the entrance? Regaining his feet, he groped his way toward the sound. There could be no mistake — it was near the door.

"Akaza! Akaza! Hear me! Open — open the door, I beseech thee!"

It was a human voice in dynamic utterance, which the roar of the ocean nearly drowned, despite the efforts of the wind to hurl it through the doorway.

Akaza hastened to comply with the request. Suddenly he stood face to face with Yermah, shivering, wet and mud-stained.

"Oh, Akaza!" he cried, kneeling before the old man and kissing the hem of his garment, "say that thou wilt forgive me! I can have no peace until I am restored to thy favor."

Akaza laid his hands upon the head that had been bared to the storm.

"Thou standest always in the shelter of my love, Yermah," he said, gently. "Offense were not possible from thy lips. Be no longer humble in my presence." He helped the Dorado to arise, and leading him toward the fire, continued:

"Let genial warmth restore thy peace of mind. The elements have undone thee."

"Distemper vanished with reflection," returned Yermah, anxiously, as he drew off his wet mantle and threw it to one side, "but remorse tortured me and drove me to thy feet, sad and repentant."

Akaza patted him affectionately on the shoulder, and occupied himself with the change of clothing he was improvising from his own garments. He substituted a purple robe for the water-soaked tunic, gave Yermah sandals, and finally wrapped his own cloak around him.

"Thy attendants, Yermah? It were not well to leave them to the mercies of air and water lashed to fury."

"None saw me leave Iaqua. Neither man nor beast shall suffer because of my misdeeds," said the Dorado. "It has taken all this time to find my way. The dying day left me resolved."

"Thy spirit called to mine at that hour," said Akaza with a glad smile. "I felt it then."

"And wilt thou have me for thy companion for the night?" questioned Yermah, happy in the restoration of harmony between them.

"That were the wish nearest my heart," said Akaza, pouring hot water into a silver cup, into

which he had already measured some spirits of maguey, some spices, and a bit of lemon.

"Sweeten as thy appetite dictates," he continued, as he handed the cup to his visitor. "And may the Father of All Mysteries attend thy ventures in the future."

Yermah arranged his disordered locks, and then nestled down beside Akaza in a caressing boyish fashion. It was plain that he had something on his mind. Finally, with considerable hesitation, he broke the silence by asking:

"Will the unbridled license of my tongue to-day count against me with the Brotherhood?"

His open countenance clearly showed what he feared.

"Only emotional natures make acceptable bearers of the Light," responded Akaza. "A mean, starved love nature is never an acceptable sacrifice, nor can such an one be an ideal for other men."

A troubled, hunted look overspread Akaza's face, but Yermah's gaze was bent on the horoscope, under the full glare of the lamp, and he did not notice it. He sighed contentedly when Akaza finished speaking, and for several minutes he tried to discern the meaning of the map.

"The portent of thy words concerning our fatherland lingers with me. Was it thy purpose to share thy knowledge with me?"

He looked up with a winning smile, and caught Akaza's eyes fixed upon him in undisguised admiration. The lamplight brought out the sheen of his yellow hair, lying damp and wavy upon his shoulders, and the pointed beard was short enough to show his

muscular white throat where the purple robe fell away, minus its jeweled gorget. A strawberry cleverly imitated in enamel, suspended from a gold chain around his neck had slipped out from the folds of his robe and dangled toward the table at which both were seated. Akaza pointed to it with a smile. He instinctively refrained from touching it, thinking it might be a cherished memento. As it lay on the palm of Yermah's hand, he took note of the inscription: *With all my heart.*

Yermah saw it too, and pressing the words to his lips, slipped the trinket into his bosom.

"Now," said Akaza, mindful of the movement, "lend thy attention, and I shall tell thee what the stars indicate is in store for our beloved country. First, let me make plain the signification of these figures," he continued, using the ivory caduceus as a pointer.

"The great band, or circle, of the zodiac represents the circumference of the universe, which contains the essence of creation. It is the cosmic egg, holding the germ within itself. The center of the zodiacal ring is the sun, the former representing the casket, the latter the jewel.

"So is it with the physical form," continued the hierophant. "It is not the mind, but that which contains it. Suppose we consider the motion of this dot within the circle when Desire has energized its movement. First a ray will shoot out in one direction, and another in an opposite direction, forming four angles constituting the four elements — hydrogen, oxygen, carbon, nitrogen."

As Akaza spoke he rapidly sketched a swastika,

the revolving cross, and then he drew a small circle, a cresent, or half-circle and a Maltese cross.

"These three factors represent spirit, soul and body,— or sun, moon and earth. In the circle we have spirit active; in the cross, latent. This is involution and evolution, pure and simple. The circle is the builder of new forms, the half-circle is the preserver, and the cross is the destroyer."

Memphis, in Egypt, was the builder of a new civilization, receiving its impetus from the immigration and settlement of a band of white magicians from Atlantis, under the leadership of Amrah, the prophet of the hierarchy to which Akaza was attached.

The Llama City on the banks of the Brahmaputra River, in the fastnesses of the Himalaya Mountains, in Thibet, where none of the modern races have penetrated, was the preserver of arcane wisdom; while Tlamco under Akaza, represented the section of the earth which was to be destroyed. Akaza was the hierophant of the triad, and Kadmon was the patriarch whose faithful followers were to carry the light to India.

"We shall represent Desire, Force and Energy by placing the cross over the circle," said Akaza still illustrating with a fragment of burned camphor and the pointed caduceus.

What he drew was the present symbol of the planet Mars.

"Here we have spirit pushing on toward manifestation, producing Experience — the supreme teacher. The negative is over the positive, and this gives us both construction and destruction. Let us destroy it — place the cross under the circle — and we have

a true symbol of Love. Spirit has forced its way through matter, and it has become one with itself."

He turned to Yermah and took both his hands in his own. Looking at him earnestly, Akaza said:

"Never forget what I am saying to thee now. *Until love has entered our hearts,* we are not in touch with anything in nature. Love is the soul; and until we feel its sweet influences in our lives, we go on seeking fresh experiences on the cross of discord. Love produces harmony. Desire produces discord. The sun represents the planet which sheds these influences, and therefore stands for Power. This is the golden bowl, the essence of Life itself. The cross and the circle are the hieroglyphs of our spiritual nature."

Akaza's look became abstracted and intense, and he mechanically pushed his hair up from his forehead.

"I see by a glance into the future that these symbols will become the phallic emblems of sex-worship, which will touch the lowest rung of the downward spiral. Woman is destined to suffer much on this account, and from another event which is close at hand."

"Thou hast made plain the creative phase," said Yermah, after a pause, wishing to bring Akaza back to the subject in hand.

"Let us concern ourselves with the mind, whose dual phases are shown by the half-circle. If we place the cross over the half-circle we have the Tempter of humanity, because this exalts matter over mind. It is the great centralizing of self.

"Every one must pass these limitations and meet the Great Judge," the hierophant continued, "and

He, in the heavens, guards Himself with triple rings. No spirit goes through the Gates of Light into His presence except he be well weighed in the balance of the seventh sign."

"This is the same as initiation into the Brotherhood," returned Yermah, involuntarily.

"It is the planetary aspect of the labor thou art soon to perform."

Akaza did not wish to go more into detail; so he hastened to say:

"If we place the half-circle over the cross, we have mind risen over matter, and compassion is the result. Then we have learned the value of mercy. The true spirit of devotion comes from the belted planet. It abuses none who are struggling upward, but lends a helping hand to all."

Seeing that Akaza laid down the caduceus and drew the horoscope closer to him, Yermah said:

"Thou hast given the symbol of only six planets. Hast thou forgotten the seventh?"

"No. That planet is made up of three factors combined; the circle is in the center; the cross, below; and the half-circle, above. This is the essence of wisdom. It is perfected manhood, and it flies through the cosmos in search of the Infinite, whose messenger it is."

Uranus and Neptune are octaves of Mercury and Venus, and belong to the spiritual triad, Saturn being the first.

"Tell me of the duality of the spirit, soul and body?" asked Yermah, for the first time making it plain that he was thinking over what had been told him during the day.

"Spirit pure and simple is the Word which was

in the Beginning. This has three phases, motion and breath being the other two. The Ineffable moved, breathed and spoke and the created universe, with all it contains, was the result."

He spoke with caution, lest he should usurp divine power.

"In mankind, it is quite impossible to define or describe that subtle thing which is denoted by the word 'spirituality,'" he continued, "the goal toward which so many efforts, such fervent aspirations are directed. Spirituality is something which differs from all these, an essence strange and deep, not expressible in other terms than itself — beyond mind, beyond thought, and, consequently, beyond speech. In the ardor of our present pursuit, we forget the fact that the spiritual can be used for evil no less than for good purposes. By failure to discriminate between the spiritual in the service of the divine and the same quality in the service of the dark powers, we may find ourselves at a point where, to regain the true path, we must with pain and agony retrace our steps and begin again."

"And the soul?"

"Is mind in all its attributes. The animal soul, or vehicle of desire, is dominated by the phases and aspects of the moon, Mars and Venus. This is the psychic world. In the body we have the physical (or material) man and the astral prototype. The material man lives as long as the spirit functions through the psychic world into the astral body, which is a part of the physical man."

"In what way dost thou mean to say creative energy contacts the body?"

"The astral body is the medium; the psychic, the

positive; and the material, the negative polarity which attracts the magnetic current, or spirit. When the astral and physical bodies separate, death, or the loosing of the bands of Orion, in a physical sense, takes place.

"The life essence in the body," the hierophant went on to explain, "is a lateral pulsation, which grows shorter and shorter as the impetus giving it motion in the beginning, is stilled. Its center is the solar plexus; but the divine spark is released through the cardiac plexus, the spiritual prototype of the solar."

"What then becomes of the deathless spirit?"

"It returns to its native habitat in space, to assimilate the experiences through which it has just passed. This act has its fitting counterpart on the material plane. As the stomach digests the food it receives, and as the mind assimilates the ideas it conceives, so the divine self utilizes the experiences it gains. As the result of the physical function is bodily health, and that of the mental process is knowledge, so, also, the fruit of the spiritual operation is wisdom. To acquire wisdom, then, is manifestly the prime purpose of human existence."

"Through what labyrinths we have to walk in order to find the Gates of Light!" said Yermah, deeply interested. "Existence is like chaos at first; and I begin to see that this is true on the three planes."

"Certainly. Man has gone too far out in the life of the senses. It is only in his sleep that he perceives the manifestations of spirit. The true student must reëstablish the equilibrium of spirit and matter. Thereby he will obtain the ability to discern

which are physical phenomena. He will perceive in the waking state such forms and apparitions as he saw before in dreams, and rise to the viewpoint where he realizes that physical forms are only the coarse and imperfect copies of those higher spiritual pictures presenting themselves to his interior senses."

"Then our dreams are not without significance?"

"Their significance lies in the fact that they are the lowest state of spiritual life. In them a man is obliged to tolerate in himself the action of good and bad spiritual forces."

Akaza arose, and picking up a small copper nut-oil lamp from a shelf-like projection of stalactite near at hand, he lighted it and led the way to a dim, shadowy cranny of the room.

Pausing before what appeared to be a pile of rush matting he handed the lamp to Yermah and began removing the outer layers. As soon as the rough-textured exterior was taken off, Yermah saw by the cloth wrapping that it was a figure of some kind. It proved to be a colossal head of diorite, a very hard variety of serpentine, or greenstone.

"This," said Akaza, "is the head of Atlantis. It was contained in the ark which we have carried with us so long in our journeyings."

"But the eyes are closed, the nostrils plugged, the mouth covered with a gag, and the ears padlocked. This is death!" cried Yermah, unable to control his emotion, shocked and awed by the spectacle. "She can neither tell her piteous story nor hear the supplications addressed to her."

He examined the head closely, and saw that the countenance before him was that of a dead person. There was the relaxation of the upper eyelids which

most forcefully expressed this idea. The head was covered with a skull-cap of shells and lines representing water. On the crown of the head was a rosette-like cap, with a button in the center.

There were four rows of these scallops. The skull-cap terminated at the sides in ear padlocks, finished with triangular appendages like that over the mouth. In each ear there was a massive bar of rounded metal inclosed within a broad, strong clasp.[1]

"Look closely at the three plates on the cheeks. They are precisely alike in form and lie over one another in the same way; so it is only necessary to examine one side."

"On the first disk," said Yermah, "is a cross, with four dots within the arms. The second one is blank, and the third has a peculiar vertical slit, which looks as if it had some connection with the arrowhead appendage — as if being slipped on to one of these, it could turn, and thus open the padlock."

Yermah tried to do what he said, but the cold, immovable stone soon disabused his mind.

"Our prophet, now at Memphis, has the key to this mystery. But I know its interpretation. Come and be comforted by warmth and light, and I shall tell thee," said Akaza, noting the shiver that involuntarily followed Yermah's ineffectual effort, and who was still much shaken when he resumed his seat beside the table containing the zodiac and horoscope.

"The earth's photosphere is really the seven cosmic serpents which enfold the planet in seven bands of race conditions. They have seven eyes, or win-

[1] This head is in the Museum in the City of Mexico. It was found in 1830 in the streets of Santa Teresa by some workmen while excavating for the foundation of a new house.

dows, of occult perception. One of these windows closes every time there is a new race developed. Thou knowest that death in any form is but a new birth. Therefore, when a new race is born its predecessor dies, and the section of our globe inhabited by the dying race is purified by water and fire."

This is what prompts the Aryan race to arise periodically and go from one part of the earth to the other. This impulse cast them out of Central Asia and Africa, where the great deserts of Sahara and Gobi now stretch their waste sands, where Assyrian plains are given over to desolation, and also left the Colorado, Arizona, and Alta California lying bleak and barren in company with the continent of Australia. This is the purification by fire, while tidal waves and the ice ages purify by water.

"The earth is a virgin," continued Akaza, "and will not submit to the defilement of man. The first eye was in the south; the second was Lemuria, in the west; the third is Hyperboria, in the north, which is still open. This will close when the white magicians come out of Atlantis. Then its purification by water commences. The fourth window Atlantis herself will close, when the fifth race is born. The races will always reproduce themselves in a triad of ten each, divided into root, sub, and family branches. This unfolding will cause much sorrow and misery in the future. There will be for ages strong hatred between the black, red, yellow and white men. They will wage war upon each other unceasingly."

"Since this is race destiny and cannot be avoided, of what use is the sacrifice and effort of the Brotherhood? It does not seem to make humanity either wiser or better."

"Many an inquiring mind has thought the same, and many a time in future must this question be answered. Know, then, that individual man is the microcosm. He has within himself all the possibilities accorded to his race, and his own life must move in the same cycle. Initiation teaches him how to harmonize himself with these laws. The ten planets of the solar system correspond to the labors decreed for finding the Way. Astrology is simply the metaphysical aspect of astronomy. Before man becomes an adept, he must undergo the ten trials. When he has done this through three successive incarnations, he is allowed to personate the attributes of divinity, and becomes a real savior of the world."

"Is he permitted to check the course of race condition itself?"

"He does not check it. He crystallizes the idea dominating the race, and transmutes it to higher planes. Under such conditions, what appears to be defeat is really victory. But thou art to remember that these heroes descend to the earth according to orderly periods of time. Frequently through one man countless multitudes are affected. Think, then, how important it is that a chosen one shall lead to the higher walks. Remember also the duality of everything."

Tradition preserves the widespread results of this teaching. It is found first in the ten phases of the self-development of Ra, in the ten avatars of Vishnu, in the ten labors of Hercules, the ten Sephiroth, the ten Norse worlds, in the ten laws on the tablets of stone, wherever given, in the knighthoods of the Holy Grail and Golden Fleece. It was lost sight of when the age of chivalry passed. In geometry, it was en-

circling the square; in chemistry, it was the making of alchemical gold.

"The wise man rules his stars, the fool obeys them," resumed Akaza, as he lifted the horoscope, and displayed the Grand Man of the Cosmos, figured in the center of the table by incised black lines on the ivory surface. The numbers and signs of the ten planets were marked on the left side. The numbers ran from top to bottom in succession, while the signs began at the bottom and ran upward.

A wide, round crown, like the rings of Saturn, surrounded the head. It emitted seven triangular rays, in the center of which was number one and the signet of the Brotherhood.

"We are all here," said Yermah, smiling, but showing surprise in finding that the numbers and signs of the planets were marked in different parts of the body, accompanied by his own and his comrades' names. It was a full-faced figure, and in the center of the forehead where the flowing hair parted, was Akaza's name, a figure two, and the sign of Uranus.

"This is a Karmic chart," said Akaza. "I aim by it to supply discriminative knowledge."

"Over the heart thou hast the sign of Saturn, and the figure three with Kerœcia's name. What does this signify?"

"Kerœcia typifies the occult mysteries. Her mission is to guide the world to love through chastening sorrows."

"I am the crosier in the right hand," exclaimed the Dorado, finding his name, the sign of Jupiter, and a figure four in the right hand of the drawing.

"Thou art Valor, and thy duty is to subdue the earth."

"Orondo is the sword in the left hand. He has the sign of Mars and a figure five beneath his name."

"Yes. Orondo is destructive force. His fate decrees that he shall disappear like illusory imagination."

"Over the stomach is Ildiko's name, the moon, and a figure six. Does that mean that she has designs on Mars?" asked Yermah, jokingly.

"Whatever glamour she casts will be in vain. It will avail her nothing," responded Akaza, smiling, also. "Setos, thou seest, is the right knee. His number is seven, and his planet the earth itself. Desire for pomp and glory is his weakness." Both men laughed heartily.

"Poor Setos," said Yermah; "his vanity is prodigious."

"Alcamayn is the left knee, marked number eight, and the planet Venus. Saturn will exterminate him, as the desire for sensuous beauty is destroyed by initiation. Over the generative organs is the sign Mercury and a figure nine, with Rahula's name, as thou seest. She is my antipode," said Akaza. "She is knowledge inverted, and what she bequeaths to men will prove fatal to them."

"Atlantis is under the feet, marked number ten, with our beloved trident, and the cross and circle of love," exclaimed the younger man with enthusiasm.

As Akaza replaced the horoscope, he said:

"We have been studying three triads, represented by our fellows. The upper one is thyself, Kerœcia and myself; the second, is Orondo, Ildiko and Setos; while the third is Rahula, Alcamayn and Atlantis. Dost thou understand the meaning of Azoth?"

"I fear to affirm knowledge of this, lest it have a hidden significance which is unknown to me."

"Azoth is the space between the luminaries and the earth. Heat and light vibrate from the sun, but it must function through the photosphere of the earth before it is visible to us. Dost thou know that between the earth's photosphere and the sun it is dark?"

"It appears to our eyesight as dark," was the cautious answer. Akaza smiled.

"Well then, know that this nonluminous medium (astral light) preserves the imprint of things visible, and the aspect of the daily heavens is reflected there. It is in this substance that the mother's fancy or cravings are transmitted and impressed upon the unborn child.

"The various atmospheric influences are conveyed through the same medium. By the fact of birth a child enters into universal harmony of the sidereal system. A network of light extends from sphere to sphere and there is no point on any planet or star to which one of these indestructible threads is not attached.[1]

"Men bear the seal of their planets on their foreheads, and especially on their hands; animals, in their entire shape and characteristics; plants, in their leaves and in their seeds; minerals, in their veins and peculiarities of fractures.

"Infancy is dedicated to the sun; childhood, to the moon; the age of puberty, to Mercury; youth, to

[1] The giant Gulliver bound in a net-work of threads by the Lilliputians is a familiar mythical form of the same belief — Gulliver representing the whole human family with its net-work of desires and illusions.

Mars and Venus; mature years, to Jupiter; and old age, to Saturn."

The head of man is shaped on the model of the starry spheres. It attracts and repels. It is this which is first formed, and appears in the gestation of the infant. The head is affected in an absolute manner by astral influences, and its diverse protuberances bear witness to the variety of these attractions.

"'All the misery of the world is written in the northern sky,'" quoted Yermah, from a familiar saying. "But how fascinating is Nature's book, with its golden letters! It was a poetic mind truly which gave us the science of astrology by tracing the lines from one star to another with his mind's eye."

"Shooting-stars are like the soul of desire and the Divine-self separated from our bodies. They always seek the center to recover equilibrium and motion. The soul, corresponding to the folds of Azoth (astral light) which surrounds and imprisons these meteors, must be disentangled, in order that the spirit may escape from the impurities still clinging to it. This is the *magnum opus,* or completed labor."

Yermah moved a little nearer, to enable him to follow the direction of the caduceus in Akaza's hand. He saw that the horoscope was for Atlantis in the near future.

"At the last vernal equinox the Lord of Day was about to leave the abode of the Lion. He now stands between this house and that of the Virgin in the celestial zodiac. In such aspect, he is approaching the fiery house of the Scorpion. When he has gone twenty-five times in the first lunation of cold

and is still within two markings of the meridian, Poseidon's reign will terminate."

"Dost thou mean that I am then to become an actual ruler?" was the first question which came involuntarily to Yermah's lips.

"Yes. The new moon at that time opens the way for the dispensation so long foretold by our prophets. We are about to see the literal interpretation of this revelation: 'I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day. The moon shall change its laws, and not be seen at its proper period. Many chiefs among the stars of authority shall err, perverting their ways and works.'

"The comet, now faint above the horizon, comes forward with terrific force, and will cast its blight on Venus and Mars. Soon this portent will be discerned in the heavens and then the people must prepare for change.

"At the time of the full moon, Saturn rises in the first house, in conjunction with the visitor—presaging a national calamity. The path of the vagrant is such as to form conjunction with Venus, and, finally, to reach the vicinity of Mars — the fiery planet which rules Poseidon's land.

"This configuration shows that the rulers have prostituted their authority, instead of leading men righteously by precept and example.

"The minds of all the people have become intensely evil, and they have been given to all forms of wickedness.

"The cohesive strength of Mars which binds the land, is broken and dispersed.

"At the new moon, seismic disturbances will be of continual occurrence; and as Mars is in the watery

sign, so there is war in the earth's interior between uncontrolled water and fire."

"So," said Yermah, "the elementals of earth, air, fire and water, that have been in sore bondage under black masters, are to gather and blend their forces to overthrow their former oppressors. So be it! Long hast thou waited for this."

"At the full moon, when she meets the opposition of the sun, these forces culminate. Then the crest of angry waters, which the elements have lashed into fury, sweeps grandly and majestically onward. The new moon is formed while the luminaries are in opposition to Jupiter and Neptune. This is but another indication of trouble in the country, because Jupiter and Neptune are in the fourth house."

Akaza indicated the places on the horoscope.

"Already this influence is beginning to be felt by Poseidon. He is encouraging our people to perform imposing magical incantations publicly. The first and second warnings were given when Ruta and Daitya sank beneath the ocean ages ago, one after another, with a long dispensation between. He should have known better than to trust the temporary defeat of our Brotherhood. It was an unfortunate day for Poseidon and Atlantis when the last remnant, led by the prophet, left there."

"The mid-heavens show Uranus and Mercury in conjunction — or they will be so at the time midway between the new and the full moon," said Yermah, as he hastily calculated the positions in the tenth house.

"This is a further token of the strained mental attitude of the rulers, who will make a frantic effort to retain their power. The exact conjunction marks

the complete overthrow of the magicians, and frees the elemental slaves. The activity displayed by the physical world draws each one back to its own particular element, and a righteous judgment ensues."

Akaza clasped his hands in front of him on the table, as Yermah shifted his position, and said:

"Thou art in truth fortunate, because the last decade has developed extreme luxury and selfishness in Atlantis."

"The conjunction of Venus and Mars, afflicted by the comet, would indicate that," responded Yermah, referring to the map.

"Mercury in sextile aspect to Venus, in the ninth house, implies a mental religion colored by the nature of Venus. The aspect of Mars adds to this a warlike element, and that which appeals to the passions."

He paused for a moment in intense thought, then continued:

"As the conjunction of Mercury with Uranus is made, all religion is lost. The moon signifies the people — the sun, their rulers. Thou seest that both are opposed to justice and right (Jupiter) and true wisdom (Neptune). The power to remedy this situation is refused, and retribution advances unopposed."

Seeing that Akaza had finished, Yermah ventured to ask:

"Does my future stand revealed in this calculation?"

"Jupiter speaks for thee in the fourth house. Thy physical body is linked with the land of thy birth, and thy return thereto denoted."

"Thou hast my gratitude, Akaza. Grant that I

may cross over the dark way; that I may enter and go out of the Hall of Truth with thee for a guide."

"The Ineffable One, Maker of all things, be thy protection," responded Akaza, as both men arose.

"Thou wilt smoke and so will I, while I make ready for our repose," said Yermah, moving about. "I have husks and tobacco in my discarded mantle," he continued, trying to find its pockets.

"I can please my fancy better," said Akaza, going back to a plain cupboard, and producing from its shelves two bronze water-pipes, identical with those used by the Chinese to-day. He found also, a chamois pouch of fine-cut tobacco. Filling the bowl with water, he put a tiny pinch of tobacco in the top of the tube, and lighted it by the lamp sitting near. He puffed three times, emptied the pipe, and repeated the process.

Yermah denied himself until he had spread out the rugs, and had placed the cushions so that he and Akaza could sleep side by side.

When he sat down to smoke, the young man realized how tired he was. The excitement of the day, his exertion, and the rain, caused him to yawn frequently. It was a sign of healthy reaction which pleased the hierophant.

Finally, unable to fight drowsiness longer, Yermah threw himself down, and was soon in deep slumber. He stretched out with the abandon and relaxation of a contented mind, throwing one arm up above his head, while his hair spread over the cushions.

Akaza watched beside him for a long time. He slept like a child, and the old man looked at him with as much tenderness as ever a mother displayed over the cradle of her first-born.

Fondness for Yermah was his one weakness. Alone in the cave at midnight, he indulged it. Without balance and discrimination, this might be mere sentimentality or mawkish sweetness. In the spiritual man, however, balance and discrimination must of necessity be present.

Therefore, in Akaza love was strong and firm, as well as tender, wise and far-sighted. Seeing clearly amid the illusions around him, his love welcomed even pain for its object, when by suffering Yermah could gain treasures, and powers and gifts everlasting. He would lift no finger to frustrate the needful work, yet was rent by greater anguish than Yermah himself.

Seeing farther and more clearly, he had strength to await the end, giving meanwhile all the sympathy and help of the truest affection.

Akaza was sitting with his eyes closed — really dozing when he became suddenly aware of a presence. He looked toward the entrance of the cave, and encountered a pair of yellow eyes glaring at him in the semi-darkness.

He was so startled that he gained his feet in an attitude of defense. The eyes gradually lowered, and in a moment Akaza heard a sniffing noise. Before he could cry out the long, tawny body of Oghi came into full view.

The animal had its head down and was tracking its master. Akaza watched Oghi approach the sleeping man with unerring instinct.

"What is it, Akaza? Dear master, why hast thou not slept?" Yermah asked, sitting bolt upright, not more than half-awake. Oghi beat the ground with his tail, and made a peculiar sneezing sound to

attract attention. It was his way of showing pleasure.

"He loves thee, also," said Akaza, as Yermah patted the animal on the head. He was on his feet in a moment.

"Oghi! Here, sir!" called the Dorado, recovering the chain which had been dragged through the mud. "How could he get in here?"

"We will tie him to one of the brass staples leaded into the wall at the entrance," returned Akaza, "and then we can find out."

Oghi made no resistance as he was led to the spot indicated.

"He has dug in under these shutters," said Yermah, as he held the light so that his companion could see. "How could he have known I was here?"

As he spoke the ocelot shook himself, and was about to lie lown.

"Let me fix him a bed," said his master; "he is a good fellow. There sir!"

Hastily gathering up some rush mats, Yermah threw them down in a pile. Oghi could not say "Thank you," but he signified it the best way that he could. With a final affectionate pat on the head, Yermah turned and followed Akaza.

"Come to bed with me," he urged. "Conscience forbids my sleeping while thou art denied rest."

Akaza yielded to persuasion; and when Yermah had deftly tucked the rugs about him, and placed the cushions, after shaking them up thoroughly, so that Akaza declared himself comfortable, he extinguished all lights but one, and cuddled up close beside the elder man, with his right arm thrown protectingly over him.

A few moments afterward, both were fast asleep.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

A TRIUMPH — AND A WORDLESS COVENANT

ON leaving Tlamco, Kerœcia was carried up the Sacramento River by the fleet of the Azes, until nearly opposite the mouth of Antelope Creek, where she was met by a company of Monbas warriors and given escort to Anokia, their capital city, situated south of Lassen Peak.

At a distance of from five to eight miles from the false base of the Sierras, is a range of isolated hills which form an irregular belt of elevation, separated from the main chain by an intervening plain.

It was here that Anokia was built, in a rocky amphitheater at the head of a stream which flows back directly northeast from its source toward the axis of the principal mountain chain.

The kettle-like form at the head of the valley opened on the north, and extended in a huge semicircle to the river below. Opposite the opening stood Lassen Peak, either as a grim protector, or in frowning distrust, according to the interpretation given to the mountain's inscrutable mood.

There were several small domes and pinnacles on the east side of the peak, and, in some places, the granite rim formed a beautifully striped parapet of bedded rock. Portions of the stone were thin enough for the sunlight to penetrate the crevices, and to throw faint but effective shadows on the layers of brilliant colors.

The more solid sections of the wall afforded a magnificent view of the surrounding crest of the Sierras which here spread out like a giant harrow overturned against the vast horizon.

Evergreen trees and undergrowth fringed the tooth-shaped outlines which the blue haze softened and blended perfectly with the lighter tones overhead, and blurred deep and heavy in the interesting glades and canyons.

The whole region presented a complicated system of sharp ridges, with immense circular cavities between, as if the entire country had suddenly cooled while boiling violently.

From out this mass, rose bold rivers which trickled along for some distance; then, gaining in volume and velocity, rushed madly across the intervening plains to mingle their clear icy waters with the turbid, débris-laden Sacramento.

Much of the land surface was reddened and discolored by the oxidization contained in the subsoil; and over it all was the brown and yellow color-scheme of the long, rainless summer months.

There were live oaks in the foothills, white oaks in the valleys, with pale, yellowish-green moss festooning the gnarled limbs, and swaying in the breeze.

The long acorns had been gathered and stored for future use. Tules covering the swampy shallows this side of the narrow timber belt on the river, were brown and seared. The wild grape vines were loaded with ripe fruit and each patch of wild oats had long since shed its grain.

Here and there a white swan glided by in stately dignity on waters so clear that the fish could be seen; while the sycamores, oaks, and willows afforded

shelter to a chattering family of magpies, bluejays, blackbirds, crows and turkey buzzards. A hawk poised itself in mid-air watching a chance to seize a meadow lark; while the sandhill-cranes, ducks, and geese disported themselves in the sloughs.

In the less frequented parts of the valley, lumbering mastodons and hippopotami mingled with grizzly bears, elk, antelope, deer and diminutive wild horses. They were screened from view by scrub oak and pine whose northern exposure was rich in yellow moss. Here was found plenty of bur-clover and bunch-grass, both of which were withered by the hot summer wind and sun. Shocks of corn and piles of fodder, still cluttered the parched ground, bearing mute, but eloquent testimony of the recent invasion of an army of painstaking reapers.

California in her brown coat is a promise fulfilled — a matured and sobered land, somewhat stern and forbidding of aspect, and set in her ways, but rich beyond compare in the abundance and variety of her harvest yield.

Despite the shimmering, blistering heat, schools of salmon had been shooting the rapids and whirlpools of the Sacramento, hastening to the shallows. It was their spawning time. They fearlessly deserted the deep pools and were piled in an indiscriminate mass in the ripples.

Animated by a kind of fury the fish were beating the sands with their tails. Sometimes, the female would wear her fins off entirely in this occupation. Then she deposited her eggs in the coarse gravel; but the greedy trout pounced upon and ate them as fast as laid if not prevented by the male salmon.

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When Yermah returned to Iaqua after spending the night in the cave with Akaza, he found a messenger from Kerœcia, inviting him to attend her birthday fête.

In addition to the autographed letter was an elaborately decorated flower-pot filled with a bunch of white, strawlike blossoms, on slender, cottony stems, with little or no foliage. To-day the French call this modest flower the "Immortelle"; the Spanish, in their soft language, say "Siempre Viva"; while in English, it is the "Everlasting."

"Never ceasing to remember," murmured the Dorado, as he examined the flowers and recognized their significance.

Yermah understood that Kerœcia had wished to send him a perfect plant, and had selected this, not only for its sentiment, but also because of its ability to stand the rough usage of a journey.

He undid the tiny roll of parchment tied to one of the stems.

It said: "Though I have not the loveliness of the rose, am I not grass from the garden where it grows?"

He kissed the written words and with his own hands carried the flower-pot into his private apartments. Never afterward, as long as he remained at Iaqua, was he without a sprig of this plant.

The first of August was Kerœcia's birthday, and this particular celebration of the event was to be of unusual brilliancy. It was also the great harvest festival of the year which always brought forth elaborate preparations by the mountaineers.

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The peculiar kettle-shape at the head of the Valley where Anokia was built, formed three sides of the amphitheater where the games were to be held.

It had a ragged, uneven surface, like the lips of a crater, which the Monbas stone-cutters had skillfully turned to account in constructing a pavilion on the south side, canopied and gay with flags, banners and silk lanterns. Rubble walls, provided with seats cut into the stone, closed the north side. Here a wide entrance was left.

Seats rose in a continuous circle, tier upon tier, until thousands could have found accommodation. The goals for the racers, the pole in the center, and each spire and battlement on the walls displayed flags. The sanded floor had been wet and packed down smooth and hard.

For an hour or more the crowds had been coming in, quietly and decorously as became men, women and children in holiday dress.

Without warning, eight forerunners dashed through the entrance and sped around the ring, shouting at the top of their voices.

"Hoop-ah! Hoop-ah! Hoop-ah!" cried the first pair.

"Hye! Hye! Hye! Hye!" said the second.

"Ho-ra! Ho-ra!" called the third.

"O-h! O-h!" sharply piped the fourth pair, moving the forefinger rapidly over the lips, and prolonging the piercing sound.

They were naked save a white linen band girding the loins and tied tightly in front. Their long, loose hair quivered with motion as they sped around the ring nerved to the highest tension by the shouts of the multitude.

Suddenly the whole city seemed to wake into noisy, turbulent expectancy. A heavy br-r-r of kettledrums, a sharp click of castanets, a blare of trumpets, and the higher notes of flutes and fifes announced the approach of Kerœcia and her guests.

With heads bent, the runners pulled themselves together for a final effort. It was a point of honor to reach the entrance as Kerœcia arrived there. The multitude understood this, and cheered lustily as the men ranged themselves in even rows, four on each side, at the exact instant that Kerœcia reached the threshold. She had time to throw a badge to each one, before they sank into the arms of attendants breathless and completely exhausted.

The "Hymn of Triumph" was caught up by the crowd and carried high above the combined efforts of the musicians, as the populace worked their fore-fingers over their lips, and followed the melody with all of the lung-power possible.

Kerœcia was attended by Ben Hu Barabe and his bride, Alcyesta, on one side, with Suravia and Mineola on the other, followed by Yermah, attended by Setos and Alcamayn on the right; Rahula and Ildiko on the left.

Arriving at the pavilion, Kerœcia was received by the priesthood of Anokia, who crowned her Queen of the Harvest, by placing a wreath of heads of ripe grain upon her brow. They gave her a cornstalk, also, which supported two ripe ears, the whole gayly decorated with ribbons.

As soon as Kerœcia received this emblem of plenty she waved it high over her head, and the whole multitude uncovered, tossing their round, pointed, conical

hats high into the air and shouted: "Ho-ra! Ho-ra! Ho-ra!"

The day was yet young, but the tamanes took advantage of the confusion while seating the procession in the pavilion to unfurl the canopies overhead, and the people made themselves comfortable under thick tapa-cloth awnings.

On the ground directly in front of the pavilion, were squares of black and white marble. Upon these the Monbas priests prepared to play the game of "Stone-Warrior," a quaint, allegorical Pilgrim's Progress, typical of the journey of life, one mile-post of which Kerœcia was passing.

Bringing up the rear of the procession were four horsemen dressed in green, with green trappings on their mounts; four tapirs caparisoned in red; four war-chariots in yellow; and twelve foot-soldiers in black.

There were two Priests of the Bow, dressed in white. This company divided — one half taking one end of the board, and the other half, the other end. Six foot-soldiers stood on the black squares, three on each side of the Priests of the Bow.

The two tapirs, horsemen and chariots, lined up evenly on the ground back of the men in black. The object of the game was to cross the board diagonally from end to end — capturing as many men as possible on the way. The first side to place three foot-soldiers in a row was the winner. In no circumstance was a man in black to touch a white square. He must always keep on the black square.

A throw of dice determined the movements of the participants. Five moved the Priest of the Bow, and he could go forward and backward as he pleased,

but he was liable to be caught around the waist and flung off the board the same as the men in black.

A four-spot moved the tapir. This meant that one man moved forward four blocks, while the tapirs headed for the four cardinal points, to denote the number of times they had been moved.

Three spots moved the horsemen; two, the chariots; and one, the men in black.

The musicians played a lively air. Then the game began.

Groups of priests stood on each side shouting instructions, warnings and words of encouragement to the players, who were obliged to follow the lead of their Priest of the Bow. Only the first two moves depended on the dice; after that is was every player for himself, counting in succession, five, four, three, two, one.

It was a strange sight for the spectator. Apparently, without any good reason, the horsemen, the tapirs and the chariots were wheeling north, south, east and west, while the black men pushed forward rapidly, seizing and flinging one another off the board, until, finally, a mighty shout went up, and three men in black stood in a row facing Kerœcia.

The tapirs, chariots and all but one horseman of the vanquished side had gone over to the victors, while on the board there were but two black men and the Priest of the Bow to oppose the winners.

"Beaten by a headless band! Bah! Bah! Bah!" vociferated the adherents of the victors.

"Score five against them!" was the imperious demand of the vanquished. The cazique hammered vigorously on the big copper gong, while the trumpeters blew three sharp blasts as a signal to clear the

grounds, and as if by magic every block of marble went with the crowd.

From the judges' stand, opposite the pavilion, ran up a banner, with figures in black on a white ground. It awarded the game by two points, giving red ribbons to the three foot-soldiers who had gained the coveted goal.

"We are obliged to count five against the victors, since they lost their Priest of the Bow after their first move. Had they protected him, they would have won all possible points."

Mingled cries of "Ho-ra! Ho-ra!" and "Bah! Bah! Bah!" greeted this announcement.

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The Baggataway players next appeared, led by Setos, Alcamayn, Hanabusa, and ten gamy Azes, followed by Ben Hu Barabe with twelve athletic-looking Monbas. This was their national game, and Ben Hu Barabe felt a pardonable pride in his men as he led them into position.

At each end of the field were the goals, indicated by two poles twelve feet high and half as far apart. There was also a center pole of equal height mid-distant between the end goals. All were surmounted by flags.

Each of the players was armed with a stick flattened at the end, and the intention was to drive the rubber ball into goal between the enemy's posts.

The Monbas defended, while the Azes attacked. A noisy, chattering, bantering, betting crowd surged up and down on each side of the players, piling up articles of every description as their respective sides seemed on the point of either winning or losing.

The attack and defense strained every nerve, keeping the twenty-four players constantly on the move. Here, a man races with another; there, he makes a prodigious throw up field; and, before any one knows what has happened the battle has been transferred, and the Azes stand fair to lose.

Alcamayn runs full against his antagonist, and both come to the ground together; while Setos fells his opponent by a sharp blow over the head. The fallen player is carried bleeding and unconscious from the field just as the Monbas rescue the ball, and send it with a triumphant shout through the goal which wins them the game.

"Foul! foul!" screamed the on-lookers. "The Azes shall not have a point. They play unfairly."

A shouting, gesticulating, seething mass of men and women surged around the judges' stand.

"Give us justice!" they demanded. The cazique pounded the gong madly. Finally, he could make himself heard above the din and noise.

"Hear thy priestess!" he called. "She begs that thou wilt remember thy duty and the occasion. There are many reasons why we feel grateful to the Azes. Judgment is suspended. All bets are invalid. Go back to thy seats and be quiet. The Monbas won their game with honor. Be content with that."

It was well for Setos and Alcamayn that Yermah was preparing for an archery contest with Ben Hu Barabe and Hanabusa and was therefore ignorant of the cause of the offense. The officers of the balsas, the warriors, and the other players among the Azes, instinctively huddled together, humiliated and ashamed, but silent.

A plaited disk of straw having a central circle of yellow nine inches in diameter, surrounded by rings of red, blue, black and white, was hung up on the center pole.

The Monbas served Yermah and Hanabusa with arrows, while the Azes performed a similar office for Ben Hu Barabe.

During the years spent in the Atlantian colonies, the Dorado had been the actual head of the fighting men; but this was the first time he had been called upon to show his skill in bow-craft to the Azes.

The fame of Ben Hu Barabe was spread far and wide, and the Monbas waited with smiling concern as to the outcome. Hanabusa had won his position with the bowstring, but Yermah's capabilities were unknown.

The stubborn pride of three races was in the struggle, and bitter defeat awaited some one. It was strictly a war function. There were precision, rigid enforcement of rules, and exactness in the attitude in which the warriors stood — motionless and impassive, while the three contestants marched in step to warlike music through the entrance and halted at the first vantage-ground.

The three men bowed and smiled in recognition of the plaudits showered upon them right and left, as they watched for the signal. A refreshing breeze fanned their faces and set all the flags in motion.

Yermah was in full regimentals as commander-in-chief. Scarlet, purple, gold, and green were his colors; but they were blended with all the skill of the ancients, so that they fitly set his personality.

Ben Hu Barabe showed his insignia as Civil Chief

and defender of Anokia, while Hanabusa was resplendent in feathers and jewels.

Yermah felt that he was the doubtful one. His glance rested for a moment on the anxious faces of his followers, but he was cool, confident and collected. There was something magnetically infectious in his encouraging smile, and before he had touched a bow, he had the undivided attention of the assemblage.

Hanabusa and Ben Hu Barabe seemed dwarfed beside him. His easy, nonchalant bearing, his unconscious grace were never more conspicuous. Still, Yermah was an alien. He stood in their midst a stranger, and fully comprehended that the loyalty of his own men would be severely tried if he failed to acquit himself with credit.

Over in the pavilion were a pair of luminous, mastic brown eyes, with glints of bronze in their depths, which were bent upon him eagerly. He could feel them drawing him in that direction, but he did not trust himself to return their questioning gaze.

There were neither knots, gnarls, nor cracks in the waxy brown six-foot hunting bow of continuous straight-grained mulberry used in the first trial. Its tips were of polished elk-horn, and there was a green chamois handhold in the center of the elaborate carving. The well-seasoned hickory arrows, forty inches long and as smooth as glass, carried flint-heads three and a half inches wide, and two inches broad, with sharp saw-teeth edges. There was a trinity of peacock feather vanes outlined in parabola above the notch end.

Courtesy gave Yermah the first shot. As he

pulled a stout buckskin shield over his right hand, he looked full into Kerœcia's face. His eyes said: "Trust me. I shall not fail."

Under the inspiration of her answering nod, he quickly raised the bow from the ground and placed it against his knee-cap, thereby securing a good purchase. With an upward body movement, he drew the long bow to its fullest capacity, faced the target and let fly.

Like the arrow of Acestes, which caught fire as it flew, or the dart of Abaris, which is the wisdom of concentrated thought, this wingèd thing sang through the air, and imbedded itself in the blue ring above the center, where it rocked violently from the shock of impact.

"Yermah of Tlamco, scores five at elevation of forty-five degrees; drawing force, one hundred and thirty pounds."

The tally-keeper in the judges' stand droned the words after the official scorer. Then the people seemed to catch their breath.

"What skill!" said one, pointing to the still quivering arrow. "What strength!" cried another, while the men of Tlamco, but lately humbled, lifted their heads proudly and looked with admiration at their leader.

The exertion flushed Yermah's face, but there was that in his expression which seemed to augur better things. He had yet to prove himself; so he renewed his efforts with energy and determination.

The second shot sent the arrow into the red ring below goal, and nearly opposite the blue, scoring seven points.

"Here is fine aiming!" said the judges to one an-

other, while the spectators leaned forward in strained positions and watched intently.

There was just the shadow of a smile around Yermah's mouth, as he bent for the final shot.

"Ping!" murmured the third arrow as it hit exact center.

"Haille! Haille!" shouted the Azes. "Haille! Haille!" responded the Monbas, catching the enthusiasm, and complimenting their visitors by adopting their cry.

The whole crowd were on their feet, all talking at once, not paying the slightest attention to the tellers and scorers, who rushed about bawling the result.

"Five — seven — nine are the points; twenty-one for final score," they said.

Yermah flung down his bow and stepped aside to make room for his competitors. He stood helmet in hand, wiping his brow, pleased with the warming sentiment manifested toward him.

"Hanabusa, the Azes, scores three, five and seven. Fifteen for final count."

"Ben Hu Barabe can do better," was said on all sides, as Hanabusa made way for him.

"Now the Azes will learn how to shoot!"

"He will never equal the first score," said other archers. "The Atlantian is a fine bowman."

Ben Hu Barabe bent to his task. He sent his first arrow with a vim and energy which bespoke long familiarity and constant practice. He, too, made a center shot, but it was the upper edge of the gold disk which received the barb; next time, the red ring suffered; but the final shot sped feebly, and barely indented the black ring.

"The first fort yields to the Azes," announced

the judges. "Move on to the next coign of vantage."

Now came the real test of skill. Here every man was interested, because they all made use of the bow and arrow themselves. The first trial was of strength, but this would require finesse and nicety of calculation. Hundreds of the spectators left their seats and crowded around the contestants.

Extremely light, highly elastic but tough yew from the forests of Oregon was substituted for the heavier bow of the chase; and the arrows had finely pointed obsidian heads, notched and smooth, but sharp as a needle.

Yermah looked well to the sweetness of his clear, clean, lemon-colored bow. When satisfied that it had the requisite softness of flexure and recoil, and that the arrows were properly seasoned, he placed one on the left side of the bow, above, and resting on the forefinger knuckle of the clenched left hand, with its notch set on the string.

The first three fingers of the right hand hooked around the string, keeping the arrow-notch between the first and second. Extending the left arm vigorously but steadily, Yermah drew the string back with his right hand to just below the chin — and loosed.

He stood with his left shoulder toward the target, looking straight in that direction, having the heels well apart, and toes turned out, leaving his legs straight, but not stiff. Raising his bow gracefully with the left hand, he drew the arrow four-fifths of its length, aimed over the arrow-tip, drew again, and let fly!

The spectators were quick to see that he made the four points perfectly. Each element of the draw,

aim, finish, and loose required the greatest nicety of execution; yet, he sped the arrows with almost incredible swiftness.

When shooting three at once, Yermah used the three sights — center, above and below aim-points. His control of the loose was so accurate, he understood the variation of vision between the right and left eye so well, that he drove all three arrows into the gold within a quarter of an inch of each other!

By the rules, he must aim above center at one hundred yards, and there was not one of the seventy-two arrows, whether sped singly or in threes, that hit below the mark. At eighty yards he was obliged to aim blankly with the four dozen arrows loosed at this distance. He chose the outer circle of white, and planted his darts at equidistance around the entire circle.

"But one more fort remains to be captured, and the Atlantian still leads," announced the judges. "Clear the enclosure! Warriors, do your duty!"

With this, the men made a rush for their seats, not waiting for the spear-points the warriors were preparing to level at them.

In the noise, confusion and excitement no one paid attention to the birds, perched on top of the pole supporting the target. There was a blue-jay, a raven, a white dove, and a green parrot, with strong cords attached to one leg of each, sitting on a crossbar or else on the gilt ball at the apex. Now every one suddenly remembered, and interest redoubled in the final score at the sixty-yard limit.

"Yermah of Tlamco fails with two points out of twenty-four shots, below aim-point. Two are above

the center line. Hanabusa looses six, and Ben Hu Barabe, four. Shall the victor take the citadel?"

"Merit wins him a shot at the birds," came from all sides.

"Yermah of Tlamco, wilt thou capture the citadel of our hearts by a final test of skill before being crowned with the yew wreath?"

When he could make himself heard, Yermah signified his willingness to comply with this request. For the first time in an hour Kerœcia caught sight of his face. It was pale, set and resolute, and she saw that the strain was telling on him.

"The parrot shall cry thee aim, and must remain unharmed. Thou mayst kill the blue or the black bird, but thou must only release the peaceful dove. Wilt thou remember the conditions?"

Satisfying this demand from the judges, Yermah came within range, and waited a favorable opportunity. By a sudden jerk of a cord extending down the side of the pole, the ball and crossbar began to revolve, and the birds were on the wing.

"Chay! chay! chay!" shrieked the mocking, insolent blue-jay.

"Caw! caw! caw!" croaked the raven; while the parrot screamed banteringly;

"Boy what ails thee? Come on! Ha! ha! ha! Oh, dear! Ah! ha! ha!—Sit still! Who will catch thy barb? I'll catch it? Thou fool, never!" Then changing tone entirely to one of biting sarcasm:

"Here's a pretty mess—a pretty mess!" There was silence for a time. Then in a thin, piping voice and ludicrous intonation:

"I shall faint! I shall expire! Help! help!" screeched the bird. Then, she became sympathetic:

"That's bad, very bad! What a poor shot! Dear me! Ha! ha! ha! ha-ha-ha-ha! Aim high! aim low! don't aim at all! Ah! ha! ha! ha!—ha! ha! ha! ha!"

The parrot was chained to the top of the pole, so that it could not fly. To make the aim more difficult the other birds were fastened by cords of unequal length. Each one must be freed by the arrow, and then the marksman must wing it before it escaped.

The first liberated was the blue-jay. Yermah cut the cord neatly, and then hit the bird while it was still rising. The arrow fell near the base of the pole, bringing the right wing with it.

The Dorado had won the yew wreath, and he now turned to the women's side of the pavilion for a signal. They could demand the last three shots. Would they do it?

He waited for Kerœcia to say. She was surrounded by a perfect rabble, gesticulating, shouting and leaning eagerly toward her.

Finally, she arose, and threw up her hand to command silence. In the lull, she turned to Yermah, who removed his helmet and inclined his head toward her, while she picked up a black flag and waved it.

There was an answering shout and a cheer and Yermah prepared to shoot again. This time he aimed at the raven. He cut the cord near the pole, and its weight caused the bird to fly downward in an oblique line. Quick as a flash the second arrow sped, and the raven came down pierced through the heart.

Once more the ball at the top was set whirling. The dove, seemingly more accustomed to this motion, rose slowly, so that the final arrow took off a toe, in severing the cord. The bird soared up in

concentric circles, but long before the plaudits ceased, it was perched in exactly the same place from which it had risen.

The Monbas and Azes fought and struggled with each other for the privilege of carrying the hero off the ground on their shoulders, while the musicians played the folk songs of the Azes.

At this juncture, Setos, Alcamayn and Cezardis galloped into the ring, and began putting arrows into the target as they rode by. Round and round they went, sometimes shooting forward, more often backward, first on a leisurely gallop, then on a dead run. Suddenly they wheeled and headed for the entrance where they were met by Yermah, Hanabusa and Ben Hu Barabe, mounted on thoroughbreds, armed with shields, horn-bows and quivers full of murderous-looking arrows.

"Hih! hih! hih!" chorused the multitude, as the horsemen made for the target, which was moving up and down while revolving.

"Click-ety! click-ety! click-ety! click!" pattered the horses' hoofs in a fine burst of speed.

"Wheel and fire!" shouted the Dorado, suiting the action to the word when nearly opposite the disk.

"P—sh!" whistled the arrows as they hit the target almost simultaneously.

"Three arrows full tilt!" was the next command, which was no sooner given than obeyed.

"Backward shot — three arrows! Send them into the pole; then circle it and pull them out."

The horsemen were crisscrossing each other in every direction, flinging sand into one another's faces. The spirited animals were rearing and careering, standing on their hind-legs or sitting back

on their haunches while this maneuver was being executed.

"A souvenir for the women before we go! Let every man of us put a dart into the post on a level with our heads. Then race out of here together."

The horses bent themselves nearly double. With mouths open and nostrils distended, they responded to the impulse of bit and spur. While the spent arrows were vibrating like whipcords, they plunged forward and raced for the entrance neck and neck, urged to their utmost capacity by the fire-crackers and bombs exploding at their heels.

The people rose *en masse*, and shouted themselves hoarse, drowning the kettle-drums and gongs in the general uproar. In the midst of it the horsemen whirled and dashed back into the arena, in hot pursuit of Yermah, whose head was almost level with Cibolo's neck, as this splendid racer stretched himself over the ground.

All the men had on wadded cotton tunics, covered with bull's-hide armor, put together in strips and riveted with brass bosses. They wore visored helmets, and carried circular shields of burnished bronze. Before they had encircled the ring, it was evident that it was a sham attack on Yermah. They tried to ride him down, but Cibolo foiled them with an instinct almost human. They often fired at the rider, but were never able to hit him.

Yermah returned arrow for arrow, sometimes from behind his shield, sometimes forward, more often backward, single arrows, and three at a time. Throwing up his shield to protect himself, or dropping over on the side of his horse so there was but one leg over the saddle, on and on he went.

At an unexpected moment, Yermah wheeled and charged furiously, lassoing the horse ridden by Setos, and then, by a skillful maneuver and a daring leap, broke through the circle which had formed around him.

He escaped into the tower of refuge — a low semi-circle in front of the pavilion — taking his captive with him.

When Yermah rode out to receive the yew wreath and red ribbon of valor, there was not an arrow in his armor nor a dent in his shield. He had escaped without a single scratch.

While his name was on every one's lips, he modestly sought Kerœcia. There were tears in her eyes, which welled over on the two bright red spots on either cheek, as she turned to greet him. Her lips trembled, but she smiled while giving him her hand. He sat down beside her almost equally overcome. Close to her ear he said earnestly, and but little above a whisper:

"I love thee. It is thine opinion I value. All else is naught."

He read his triumph in her eyes; she heard the one declaration in the world for her. They were alone in the crowd, whose unheeded plaudits came to them in an impersonal sort of way.

They had a few minutes' respite from the duties of the hour, a little season of quiet communion, while a feeling of adoration welled up from their hearts and submerged all the other senses. It created a halo about them and moistened the shining eyes gazing steadfastly at one another. Overpowering emotion rendered them speechless, while the soul union,

the mating of their real selves, was consummated in a wordless covenant.

During the eloquent silence each had knowledge that the other had set up a shrine in the holy of holies of their being which none of the trials of after-life would desecrate, nor would either ever be capable of violating its sanctity.

In this expression of love was that perfect blending of ideality and desire which is the very essence of marriage. It is the molding and cementing influences which, in fortunate cases, so dominates such intimate and close association that in old age they look, speak and act alike. Nor does death finally take one and leave the other.

The skill and dexterity of the bowmen, the wild, fearless riding, the daring onslaughts, the imminent risk of life and limb smacked strongly enough of actual warfare to arouse the tiger which at our best moments only sleeps within us.

Like true children of nature, these people entered with much zest into the ridiculous performances of a monkey and clown perched upon the backs of swift-paced burros.

In the midst of this race, jugglers with balls, javelins, disks and parasols, gave exhibitions of their skill, while heavy copper bars and hammers were tossed and flung about with apparent ease. It was a busy time with the gamblers and fortune-tellers, as well as with the venders of all kinds of trinkets.

"Clang! clang! clang! clang!" sounded the big gong.

"Clear the ring for the caribou race!" shouted the cazique, as he clattered by on horseback.

"Clear the ring, everybody! This is the women's race!"

While the performers were scurrying about, obeying this order by getting their belongings out of the way as rapidly as possible, three chariots were driven in, containing Kerœcia, Ildiko and Alcyesta.

"Yermah, the victorious, challenges for the high-priestess, Kerœcia," announced the judges, as Yermah advanced to the head of the priestess's team.

In the deafening outburst following on all sides, the caribou became unmanageable, and it was several minutes before the entanglement could be straightened out sufficiently to warrant further procedure.

"Alcamayn of Tlamco, challenges for fair Ildiko."

The little jeweler stepped out proudly and took a position in front of the state carriage of the Azes, the same ivory and gold vehicle which Yermah had driven when Kerœcia visited the Llama city.

"Ben Hu Barabe, of Anokia, challenges for Alcyesta. The contest is for a gold cup, given by this city. Partisans of each team must lay wagers lively. Stand back, men, and give the women a chance! Once and a half around the ring! Now for the cup!"

The three chariots went over the chalk-line in a fairly even start, and the sharp click of running hoofs and the buzzing of the wheels told of the speed being made.

It was easy to distinguish the racers. The wide palmated horns made each runner instinctively pull apart, so that bunching was impossible. Besides this, the colors were very distinct.

Kerœcia wore yellow, with a jeweled agraffe and girdle, while on her head was still the ingenious crown of golden grains. Her chariot was of pale green, elaborate in decorations of dull gold on raised patterns. Streamers of the same color fluttered here and there, and were threaded in a network over the heads of the caribou.

Ildiko was in light blue, with an embroidered Zouave jacket of black. A jeweled band confined her long, crinkly white hair, while red and white cords interlaced the wide-spreading horns of her racers.

Alcyesta's chariot was black, but rich in traceries of silver and painted flower ornaments. She wore a pink robe, with a silver agraffe and girdle, set with pearls and turquoise. Pink and white cords trimmed her whip and tied the horns of the caribou.

For an instant the chariots moved side by side, the women giving free rein, but withholding the whips. At the first quarter, Ildiko led slightly; but in attempting to round the curve of the half-goal, Alcyesta caught a wheel in the post, snapping it in two, like so much straw.

With such momentum, it was not possible to check the speed, and before either could prevent it the horns of Ildiko's and Alcyesta's teams were tightly interlocked. Instantly there was a terrific hubbub. Men from all sides ran to their assistance.

"Let us race it out!" cried Ildiko.

"Agreed!" answered Alcyesta; and both women laid on the lash forcibly, scorching the ground with their flying wheels.

"Keep clear! Give them leeway!" shouted the cazique, charging the crowd with his horse. The caribou had shaken themselves loose.

"It is a splendid race!" cried the judges, as the last quarter stake was passed.

"Run, Ildiko!"

"Use thy whip, Kerœcia! Thou must not let them beat thee after all!"

"Give them their heads, Alcyesta! Thy reins are too tight!"

The women were leaning forward talking to the nervy roadsters, with hair flying over their shoulders, ribbons fluttering, and the wheels fairly singing as they flew past the chalk-line.

"It is an open race for the cup. Kerœcia took no advantage. Now she must run for it!"

And she did. Saphis and Phoda knew her voice. They caught her impulse as she loosed the rein, and they went like the wind.

"Crack! crack!" snapped her tiny whiplash.

It seemed as if the caribou would jump out of their skins. Not being accustomed to the whip, they were much more frightened by its noise than by the sting of its lash. Theirs was simply a mad headlong plunge forward, taken in time to clear the first goal.

Ildiko and Alcyesta had enough to do in preventing a break as their knowing animals neared the scene of their former mishap. They were fearless runners, and responded gamely to the lash; but there was an imperceptible hesitation, a disposition to shy, and Kerœcia whipped in a full neck ahead.

On she went around the ring, unable to control her terror-stricken team. It was the whip laid on their tender backs for the second time which rendered them unmanageable.

"Hold them steady until they calm down," advised the cazique, galloping beside her.

Setos and Alcamayn hastened to Ildiko, assisting her to alight, while Ben Hu Barabe carried his wife through the crowd and set her down in safety before turning his attention to Kerœcia.

"Ho, Saphis! Ho, Phoda! Fear not, little ones! Thou hast done nobly! Steady! Steady now! Ho! Ho!"

She had braced herself against the front of the chariot and was pulling back with all her might. With a quick, sharp turn, the cazique reined up in front of the vehicle just as Yermah caught the bit of one of the caribou.

The sudden stop threw Kerœcia across the dashboard. She quickly recovered her footing, bruised and shaken, but much more concerned for the steaming, panting, high-strung winners than for herself. She spoke soothingly to the animals, as she stroked their ugly proboscis-like snouts, while they champed their foam-flecked bits and gazed at her with still a gleam of terror in their eyes.

As soon as the ring was cleared, the people settled themselves back and looked expectant. Familiar as they were with a mammoth elephant there was always something fascinating in its unwieldly bulk.

The crowd had waited all day with characteristic patience to see the tricks of some performing elephants, brought down by the Mazamas from the far north, especially to honor Kerœcia.

Zoyara, Cezardis and Zombra came through the entrance dressed in black skin-tight garments ablaze with mica spangles and barbaric jewels. They wore gayly striped sashes around their waists, and ostrich

feathers in the silver head-bands, while their arms and ankles jingled with bracelets and bells.

Back of them came two keepers leading a pair of tremendously large rusty-black, shaggy-coated elephants, with long, ivory tusks, which curved out and curled up viciously. Zombra and Zoyara stepped to one side. Cezardis called:

"Hear ye all! These young and tender creatures are in love. Sven here is about to offer himself to the shapely Loke, whom he loves to distraction. Bashful young men, please take notice! This exhibition is for thy especial benefit."

He gave both elephants a sharp prod with a bronze-tipped goad which he carried. Sven began to tremble all over. His huge loose skin, much too big for his ponderous body, moved forth and back mechanically, in well-simulated emotion, and the hair raised in every direction as he approached Loke.

"Down on your knees, sir! Down, sir," shouted Cezardis, hitting him a heavy whack across his forelegs. The elephant fairly shook the ground beneath him as he came to a kneeling posture.

"Bow your head respectfully, sir!" commanded Cezardis.

Sven laid his ears close to his head, and drew his trunk well under, giving himself a ludicrously shamefaced expression.

"Give Sven his answer, Loke. Answer, I say!"

Loke stuck her trunk up in the air, and with a disdainful toss of her head, waddled off in an opposite direction, to the delight of the audience. Their shouts of laughter were a signal to Sven.

He fell over on his side, and stiffened himself out as if he were dead.

"Oh, poor fellow! P-o-o-r fellow!" cried Cezardis, with mock pathos. "I know how it is myself, sir."

The elephant raised its head and looked at him.

"Think better of it, old man. Thou mayst have had a lucky escape. Here comes her sister and husband. Let us stand to one side and observe how they get on. Brace up, sir!"

Sven and Loke were on the outside when the keepers brought in the other pair of elephants — Loke keeping her head in an opposite direction.

Cezardis gravely introduced the newcomers, and then turned to the putative husband and asked:

"Didst thou have a good breakfast this morning, sir?"

The elephant shook his head and trumpeted dolefully. His mate stamped the ground indignantly, then rushed at him, butting him in the side. He whirled around and kicked at her. Then they locked trunks and seemed bent upon annihilating each other with their sawed-off stumpy tusks.

"How is this for married life, sir?" inquired Cezardis.

Sven turned to his audience and winked prodigiously, while his sides shook as if he were convulsed with laughter.

At this moment Loke picked up a saw-tooth palm-leaf with her trunk, and hid her face.

Cezardis allowed the putative benedict to toss him up in the air several times, and finally, by a dexterous leap, landed between the mammoth's ears.

"The long-looked-for elephant race is about to begin. To give some idea of the individual gait,

we shall first walk the animals, and then they will trot side by side for points. Do not let the disgraceful conduct of the wedded pair weigh against them. A bad breakfast tries the best of us."

There was a loud blare of trumpets and a vigorous beating of kettle-drums, while the spectators cheered heartily, as Cezardis turned somersaults, stood on his head, and played all sorts of pranks on the back and above the ears of the elephant.

The animals walked first leisurely and then more hurriedly around the ring. When the second round was completed, Cezardis boldly slid down the trunk of the leader, and with a graceful bow ran out of the way.

The keepers adroitly arranged the elephants in pairs, throwing a gourdful of capsicum into each mouth, in order to increase their pace.

"The race begins! Close thy bets!" shouted Cezardis.

The trainers of the animals used the goad unsparingly, and soon the huge mountains of flesh were stretching their tree-like legs to the utmost.

They trotted ponderously side by side for a few moments amid the clangor of bells, the deafening shouts of the multitude, and an ever-increasing tempo of music.

"Sven and Loke lead the first quarter!" yelled the judges.

"Their pace increases!" cried everybody, and the excitement was at fever heat when the elephants began to trumpet.

Before they reached the half-stake they were all galloping wildly, and the spectators were beginning to look at each other with blanched faces.

On the racing animals came round the turning-point, trumpeting and bellowing furiously. Every jump shook the ground under them like an earthquake, until the pavilion itself rocked like a ship at sea.

Fortunately, the race started near the entrance, and the panic-stricken people were now scrambling recklessly, some through the wide-open gates, while others clambered up for the highest seats where they huddled together and clung to one another frantically.

On the maddened animals came, with their mouths wide open and their swinging trunks sprinkling capsicum, copiously mixed with saliva, over everything.

They were in a compact mass, moving with all the irresistible velocity of an avalanche, and growing more and more terrified at their own freedom.

Great rivers of brine poured from their bulging eyes, while their mouths drooled as if they were on fire.

The unerring instinct which distinguishes their descendants caused these forest monsters to fall into line one behind the other, as they made for the open air.

Men and animals fled before them in every direction as they thundered down the valley, stampeding everything for miles around. Their trumpetings could be heard long after they were out of sight, and it was easy to track them — for they beat down a solid pathway fully a foot below the surface.

Cezardis and the keepers mounted and hastened after them. After an hour's hard riding, they were found, standing in the river industriously spouting water over their unsubmerged backs.

"The heat and excitement has been too much for

them," Cezardis said, making an ineffectual attempt to stay the panic. "There is nothing to fear. It is only their idea of a frolic."

To the keepers he said, "What under the sun didst thou give the brutes?"

"A gourdful of capsicum," answered one of them. "We knew thou wert in the habit of slipping a pepperpod in their mouths when thou wouldst have them appear lively. And," he naïvely continued, "we knew they would be thirsty in the heat and crowd."

"It will not be safe to take them back to the pavilion. An elephant never forgets an injury, and they would probably demolish the whole place if they saw it again. Thou art sufficiently punished by being obliged to remain here on guard, while the feasting, music and dancing goes on, to-night. I shall send thee covering and food," he promised, as he swung into the saddle and started back.

The massive feet of the mammoths threw up clouds of dusty sand, thickening the air like fog, while the floor of the amphitheater looked as if it had been newly plowed.

With their exodus the still terrified people rushed out of the enclosure pell-mell. They pushed and crowded through the gateways as if danger assailed them from behind.

Those in the lead made great haste after they had passed out, dragging their children by the hands, while the little ones looked back over their shoulders and cried as they ran along.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THE FEASTING — THE DANCING AND THE BETROTHAL CUP

THE sun was inclining well toward the west, and there was a savory smell of roasted meats, steaming vegetables and ripe fruits assailing the olfactory nerves, and appealing strongly to the inner man — the unchained tiger of the stomach.

The children set up an impatient clamor for something to eat, as they caught sight of the long, low tables spread under the trees; but, there was a decorum to be observed, which the elders rigidly enforced.

Whole animals had been roasting through the previous night in trenches twelve feet long, two feet wide, and two feet deep. Fires were built in them, and when thoroughly dried out, great spits were put in half-way to the top, and over a bed of red-hot charcoal the meat was cooked. During this process it was moistened frequently with spiced vinegar, and a *sauce piquante* of chili, with which salt had been freely mixed.

Beef, venison and bear-meat were prepared in this way, while rabbits, wild turkeys, geese, ducks, quail and small birds were roasted and stewed by separate methods. Near the trenches, pots of curry, rice and mutton were simmering over slow fires. Deep brass

cylinders, with glowing charcoal in the bottom, kept steaming tamales ready for instant service.

There were great ash-heaps filled with sweet potatoes roasted to a turn. Huge chafing-dishes contained beans, tomatoes, stuffed cucumbers and stews of all kinds, while lettuce, cresses, red peppers, radishes, leeks and onions were heaped upon the tables in profusion.

Nasturtium seeds, capers and olives were among the relishes. Great brick ovens hid many a fruit confection and pastry, and there were stacks of tortillas fresh from the hands of the baker. Fresh curds and honey were in liberal allowance on each table, while large wicker baskets groaned with their burden of ripe peaches, pears, apples, guavas, bananas, tunas and pineapples.

On clean grass mats were water-melons, cantaloupes and grapes while oranges, lemons, pomegranates and quinces were among the candied and preserved fruits.

Walnuts, peanuts, filberts and pine-nuts by the bushel, were at hand for service, while immense jars were filled with pulque, metheglin, tequila and koumiss. These drinks were called "zadar" meaning to spin, as the head feels after indulging in them. For the more soberly inclined there was chocolate flavored with vanilla, and piled high with whipped cream, served either hot or cold.

Cotton napkins and pottery ewers filled with water were beside each earthenware plate. Despite their impatience, the children were compelled to perform ablutions the same as their elders, before sitting to eat. For their use, lacquerware dishes were provided.

Gay-colored silk lanterns hung from the trees,

which were also garlanded overhead with ropes of flowers, filling all gaps for the nonce and excluding the too-searching sunlight. All made haste to sit, while lips moved in silent thank-offerings.

The musicians played softly as Kerœcia passed rapidly along the lines, hospitably sprinkling ashes of aloes and rosewater over the people. Many kissed the hem of her garments, or murmured blessings or good wishes for her health and happiness.

With a bound she was up the steps of the canopied dais upon which the tables were laid for herself and special guests. Civil and military officers filled the outer seats, while the priests and healers faced them.

At the inner table, Yermah sat on the right of Kerœcia, and Cezardis on the left. Facing them at the opposite end was Alcyesta, with Zoyara and Ben Hu Barabe. The intervening spaces were occupied by Setos, Rahula, Alcamayn, Ildiko, Zombra, Suravia, Hanabusa and Mineola.

Fragrant blossoms in the form of globes, stars and cresents hung from the blue domelike canopy, while fern brakes and loose bracken wound around the supporting columns. Vases of silver, gold and onyx, set with jewels, supported the daintier blooms that adorned the table, and plates and spoons of tortoise-shells, inlaid with mother-of-pearl, contrasted sharply with the white cloth.

Drinking-cups of polished horn, ewers of gold and silver inlaid together, and hand basins of bright enamel, made the table both elegant and luxurious.

As Kerœcia approached, her guests arose and joined in the shout "Ho-ra! Ho-ra! Ho-ra!" which went up from the multitude. With a simple gesture, Kerœcia bade them be seated. Then, with

a sign of benediction to the four cardinal points, during which time all joined in her prayer, she seated herself, and the feast began.

For three hours they ate, drank and made merry, passing compliments and toasts along the lines of tables, calling pretty sentiments across to one another, until the verge of temperate indulgence was fully reached. Long before this, the children had been released from the table refreshed and ready for a romp under the shade-trees. With a sigh of satisfaction, their elders waited for a signal to rise.

"A libation to the Ineffable One, the Indivisible, I-am-I," called Ben Hu Barabe, standing back of his wife, holding a patera cup of ivory, having a gold tracery over its surface, and filled to the brim with pulque.

"Om-ah! Om-ah! Om-ah!" was the reverential response.

Ben Hu Barabe faced west, and with a graceful sweep of the arm, poured the liquid on the ground.

"A libation to the Trinity, whose creative, destructive and preservative aspects are everywhere manifest," said Yermah, as he stood behind Kerœcia, and held up a jeweled cup evenly full of metheglin.

"Om-ah! Om-ah! Om-ah!" responded the assemblage, as Yermah made a low obeisance to the east, and poured out the offering with a wide splash.

"A libation to the four elements of the All Powerful — to earth, air, fire and water — to the four parts of the heavens where His kingdoms are," said Cezardis, rising, followed immediately by Zoyara, Setos and Hanabusa, each holding an onyx and silver cup brimming over with koumiss.

Each faced a cardinal point and quickly emptied his cup.

A crash of music mingled with the "Om-ahs!" and every eye turned expectantly toward Kerœcia.

At this anniversary each year since Kerœcia had been among them, a bethrothal cup had been set in the center of her table. It was the one day in the year when she was privileged to choose a husband. The marriageable men loyally showed themselves, but stood with averted faces lest their intent gaze should embarrass and disconcert her. Every one withdrew from the table and left her free to act.

Would she merely bow her head and follow her maidens, as she had done before, or would she return the confidence of her people in full? She was still standing as they left her, amid a feeling, impressive, and intense silence.

Quickly she called:

"Alcyesta, Suravia, Mineola, intercede for me!"

Then she hastily signed to the musicians, and, soft as a breath of Æolian harps, came the answering notes. The three priestesses intoned in low, sweet voices, stretching out their arms in supplication to the north, west and south. Their bodies swayed forth and back as they brought their open hands even with their foreheads, palms downward, and then opened their arms as wide as possible again, repeating the process continually. Many of the women were moved to tears as they heard the familiar strains, while some of them mechanically joined in the chant.

Since freedom and unconsciousness are the only expressions of modesty, why, in the name of all that is simple, sincere, and natural, is it considered wrong

for a woman to give expression to affection. As well might it be held a shame to live and breathe because uninvited to be born. It may be that it is for the harmony, delicacy, joy, mystery and beauty of love that the differences of sex should be recognized in the right of initiative. Or the notion may lie in the atavism of human nature which stands trembling between the glory of its destiny and the meanness of its achievement.

Kerœcia had a naïve, tender, shrinking, sensitive nature, but one in which love clothed itself with many charms and graces. There was no sense of original sin hanging over her head to suppress, intimidate and pervert her love nature. She knew no reason why she should not select a mate. With the confidence of this assurance, she picked up the betrothal cup.

The act combined the strength of the sea, the firmness of the mountains, the freedom of the winds, with all the shy grace of the violet hidden by tall grasses and veiled with dew.

The cup, a pale violet stone which had been blocked out and ground down, was supported by a slender golden stem, twisted and set with pearls and emeralds.

Something of the import of Kerœcia's action dawned upon Yermah as he stood transfixed, pale and agitated, while his very life seemed to hang upon her every movement.

It was a woman's courage, born of love — the love of giving herself wholly to the object of her choice. Nerved by this feeling, she came toward him confidently, but with a timid smile and rising color, and gave the cup into his trembling hands.

For a moment, he shrank back from her.

"O God! My oath!" was wrung from his lips. It was for an instant only.

"But I love her with all my soul!" he cried, as he knelt and kissed the proferred hand.

Ignorant and innocent alike of the cause of his emotion, Kerœcia sought to reassure him.

"The Monbas will love thee, too," she said. "Hear their assenting shouts."

"Atlantis and her dependencies shall worship and adore thee, as I do. Kerœcia, my love, I shall be a loyal husband to thee."

"As I shall be a dutiful and loving wife to thee!"

The betrothed couple were nearly swept off their feet by the crowds which surged around them. The Monbas and Azes embraced each other, called one another brother, and pledged fealty to the new alliance.

Thus was the compact ratified.

Every one was anxious to talk the matter over with his neighbor. So, they all sought their homes in animated groups, leaving behind a scene of disorder. Napkins were scattered wherever the last ablutions were performed. Ewers and cups with their contents had been frequently overturned. Fragments of food, cooked and uncooked, some untouched and others partly eaten, were abandoned by the sated appetite, and left without further thought, until hunger should recall their excellence.

In a short time the streets were silent and deserted, the remaining hours of the day being devoted to a siesta indoors. No one issued from his house again until night unpinned a black curtain and rolled it down over the earth.

When God had hung His lanterns in the sky, the

people came together again. They went back to the pavilion which was now a blaze of light from the many flambeaux stuck into brass urns around the high walls, augmented by hundreds of silk lanterns festooned on wires stretching across to the center pole. There was breeze enough to keep the flags in motion, and to cause the lights to flicker fitfully, adding to the fairylike beauty of the scene.

The character of the music had entirely changed. The kettle-drums were muffled and beaten with the fingers only. Instead of the blare of trumpets, there were harps such as the Yaqui Indians use, and differing but little from the modern instruments.

Slabs of black and white marble covered the ring floor, save where a wide passageway had been left on all sides for use of the people in seating themselves. The pavilion had been transformed into a bower of roses and artificial trees.

Under a floral canopy, Kerœcia, dressed in white and silver gauze, sat with one of the judges on either side of her. She was waiting to crown the victors. The musicians made victory, love and triumph their theme, as Yermah, escorted by Ben Hu Barabe, approached and knelt to receive a crown of lilies and a palm.

"Rise in thy majesty, bearer of the victorious palm! Go forth and renew thy triumphs, until the sun comes again to strengthen thy lion heart. Peace be with thee!"

"Hear me, O Priestess! Grant thy servant leave to encircle thy slender fingers with a set of rings made for thee, having the virtues of the planets and sent with the blessings of the people of Tlamco," entreated Yermah, kneeling.

"Thy wishes and those of thy people are law unto me," responded Kerœcia, giving him her hand.

Alcamayn presented him with a cushion of purple silk on which lay the seven rings.

"A sapphire set in gold, worn on the first finger, brings the blessing of the sun," said the Dorado, slipping the ring on her finger. "Beside it I place a bloodstone set in tin, to enlist Jupiter in thy welfare; the cautious guardianship of Saturn is in the turquoise and lead, with which I encircle thy middle finger; Venus, the goddess of love, governs the third finger, and for an amulet demands an amethyst set in copper; the moon inclines the heart of thy people toward thee, and will bless thee with children, if a diamond in silver setting is also placed on this finger."

Yermah lingered a moment over his task, and looked up at Kerœcia for approval.

"This curiously wrought band contains a magnet, and is intended for the little finger, the throne of Mercury, the wise one, who stands as an outer sentinel to guard and strengthen love," he continued.

"The seat of will-power is in the thumb. Let this serpent of iron with an emerald eye bring to thee the warrior spirit of the planet Mars, subdued and sweetened by the quality of Venus. May the All-Seeing Eye supply thy inner vision, and may every craving of thy heart be satisfied."

"Then must thou express the gratitude oppressing me, when next thy voice is heard in the Llama city," replied Kerœcia, as she motioned Yermah to rise.

Wreaths of bay-tree, of laurel in berry (whence the term baccalaureate comes when it is given to young physicians), olive, myrtle, and nasturtium vines were bestowed and proudly worn by men who had con-

tested for them earlier in the day. To the less successful, were given ribbons of red, blue, and green.

The whole scene was animated and brilliant. The gayly dressed throng pushed and elbowed one another, paying little or no attention to the award of prizes, in their desire to see and to be seen.

The dances were about to begin, and there was a bevy of pretty girls ready to do their share. Up the steps of the pavilion, dancing on their way, came boys dressed as birds and butterflies, in garments of blue, green, and yellow plumes. They ascended into the artificial trees, moving from branch to branch, pretending to sip dew from the flowers. Then came the special guests, who were garbed like gods, having blow-guns in their hands, with which they feigned to shoot the birds.

Kerœcia invited the visitors into her bower, and gave them a mixture of rose-leaves and tobacco to smoke.

Immediately the familiar strains of the harvest dances were heard, and the people began to clap their hands in accompaniment. From the four cardinal points a line of dancers was forming, composed of young girls dressed as fairies. The sylphs came from the east, dressed in sheer white, made short and very full, with graduated spangles of gold coming out like a sunburst from the gold band at the waist. Orange and jasmine blossoms wreathed their heads. They danced quickly up to the pole in the center, and took the yellow streamer hanging from the immense flower parasol suspended over the top. Joining hands, they waited for their companions.

Next came the salamanders, in parti-colored dresses of flame-red and black, so thickly spangled with mica

that in the flaring light they looked as if sparks had been showered over them. Their long black hair was full of diamond powder, and they had red roses and carnations on their heads. The same dainty steps, with the hems of their stiff skirts in their fingers, brought them to the center where they secured a red streamer.

Then came the undines, the water-sprites, dressed in Nile-green gauze liberally trimmed with silver, while their girdles were of silver filigree, shaped like serpents. Their fluffy white hair was crowned with lemon and citron blooms, and agraffes of silver were also worn. They came from the west, and selected a white streamer.

From the north came queer little hunchbacked creatures, wearing conical caps which terminated in sharp points. These gnomes sparkled with mineral wealth, in jeweled bodices and caps, while their skirts were earth-colored gauze, brightened by iridescent sequins and embroideries. These dancers picked up the remaining black streamer.

Slowly the columns began to circle around the pole, going faster and faster until the streamers were wound around it, and as often reversing the process. Forming a square, they began a basket weave, during which time little children ran forth and back to represent the shuttle.

With a grand apotheosis of the seasons, during which each group danced separately, and, finally, all together, they bowed, threw kisses to Kerœcia, and ran off the platform.

A few minutes afterward, each square of marble was occupied by a young woman dressed as a priestess, in long, voluminous robes of pale pink, lavender,

blue, and white, with double and single key patterns marked out in black. The necks, the bottoms of the skirts, and the edges of the sleeves were so ornamented. Gold bands coiled around the back part of the head and held the long hair in place. Sandals, having pointed toes curling well up over the foot, and laced together with gold cords, completed their costumes.

The dancers were placed so as to form a representation like the maze of Dædalus, and each whirled separately and at such a rate as to confuse the beholder.

Ildiko took a parti-colored handkerchief and challenged Alcamayn to follow her. The dancers kept up the whirling wherever she was, while the others held their interlaced hands high over their heads and danced in an indescribable labyrinth.

In and out darted Ildiko, with a tantalizing fling of the handkerchief, taxing all Alcamayn's ingenuity to follow, especially when the spectators sought to mislead him by an incessant clamor of gratuitous advice over and above the hand-clapping. Finally, he succeeded in securing a corner of the square, which he retained, dancing with Ildiko up in front of the pavilion.

As soon as Kerœcia recognized them, the whole group prostrated themselves before her, and then rising simultaneously, executed a serpentine dance, in which all the colors were beautifully blended.

As the music ceased, the crowd began moving toward the gates, and soon after, quiet reigned supreme.

Yermah gained courage from the unfailing kindness shown him everywhere. It loosed his tongue,

and he longed to talk of his hopes and plans. Lover-like, he was tormented with curiosity concerning the minutiæ of Kerœcia's life; so he lingered the greater portion of the next day at her house.

These two indulged in the dearest, sweetest possible exchange of confidences. The revelations they made amounted to nothing in themselves, yet were priceless treasures to the recipients.

Halting sentences, eloquent silences, phrases broken by kisses sweeter than honey of Hybla, explanations emphasized by a caressing touch of the hand, tones and accents whose inner meaning was made plain by a love-lit eye, all the sweet nothings talked heart-to-heart by lovers gave them several hours of unalloyed happiness.

"I am of the same descent as thou art, my beloved," said Kerœcia, as Yermah drew her head toward him, and kissed the hair where it parted on her forehead.

"How art thou related to me except by the silken cords of affection?" he asked, ready to indulge her for the sake of hearing her talk.

"Because years ago, my ancestry came from Atlantis."

"Very true, the Ians were originally from Atlantis, but they have long made war on Nimrod's descendants."

"Oppression and ill-use drove them to rebellion. They were forbidden to worship as I do, and for this reason they set themselves free."

"I went directly to Nineveh, a callow youth, ungainly, beardless and without discretion —"

"Wouldst thou have me quarrel with thee?" demanded Kerœcia, as she held her hand tightly over

Yermah's mouth. He shook his head, and with his hands imprisoned the audacious member.

"Then thou must not abuse my property," she continued, with an engaging pout.

"Wouldst thou have loved me then?" he asked. Being satisfied with her reply, he added: "There I performed the first labor of initiation."

"What meanest thou, by initiation? Is it something Akaza teaches thee?"

"Initiation is a task imposed upon me by the Brotherhood of the White Star in my father's court. When I have finished the labors I shall be of the Brotherhood myself. This is necessary for a Grand Servitor."

"Tell me of thy journeyings," she said, nestling close beside him, yet with a coyness and reserve all her own. "Thou hast traveled very far."

"The second year was spent at [1] Memphis, Egypt, where I performed the second labor. Then I went among our colonists in [1] Phœnicia; thence to the [1] Etruscans, where I learned to work in metals; then among the [1] Kelts, where I learned bow-craft; thence to the [1] Vikings and the land of the [1] Basques. Returning to Poseidon's kingdom, I set sail for the land of the [1] Incas; and from there I came to Tlamco, the last outlying colony of the [1] Toltecs, one of the three main tributaries to the Grand Servitor Poseidon. Art thou satisfied?" he asked.

"Not quite. Hast thou loved no one all these years?"

"Yes; and very much," confidently assented Yermah.

Kerœcia shrank back as if a blow had been dealt

[1] Modern names preferably used.

her. Everything swam before her, and she was faint and wan.

"Whom?" she gasped.

"Myself," said Yermah, holding her tightly. "Art thou jealous?"

"Not now," she replied, with a look that enchanted her admirer.

"Wilt thou hear other confessions? I can accuse myself of much more."

"And compel me to love thee the more for them all. Thou shalt leave me sufficient mind for besetting affairs," answered Kerœcia.

"Wouldst thou have me for thy slave?"

"No. But I would be thine."

"Lend thy confidence fully, that I may worship where thou art pleased, and abhor that which offends thee."

"That which I value most of all my possessions is this distaff given me by my mother," said Kerœcia, bringing forward a slender strip of bamboo, not much larger than a darning-needle, lightly weighted with pellets of clay.

It had a jeweled handle and a wheel of hardwood, polished and set with mother-of-pearl. A tiny shell served for a socket, should the weight of the spindle prove too heavy for the gossamer threads used.

"Wilt thou spin?" asked her companion, placing a seat for her.

With girlish eagerness and gratified pride, Kerœcia sat down so intent upon a display of dexterity and skill that she was unconscious of the fact that her soft clinging skirts were tightly drawn over one leg the entire length, and high enough to reveal the ankle and instep to good advantage. With the other

foot she set the treadle going, and soon her shapely arms were following the flying shuttle. The well-poised head, the long, slender throat, and the regular rise and fall of a perfect bosom helped to complete the poetry of her motions, and Yermah feasted his eyes while she worked.

Glancing upward by chance, Kerœcia caught the expression of his face, but was by no means displeased because she saw desire mirrored there.

Who can resist the intoxication of the senses? — especially their instinctive pledge, which does not rise to the mental plane, but is merely a matter of exquisite feeling on both sides.

In his agitation, Yermah busied himself clumsily with the spider-web threads, and soon had them hopelessly entangled. He was so genuinely distressed when they broke that his companion hastily put the wheel away and substituted an instrument like the zither, only much larger, played with thimbles of tortoise-shell fastened to the fingers.

Kerœcia sang a plaintive love-song to her own accompaniment. When she had finished, Yermah sat down beside her and slipped his arm around her waist.

"Something in thy song makes me sad. Tell me again that thou wilt be happy as my wife."

She patted his cheek tenderly and gave the assurance.

"And wilt thou pray that children may bless and sweeten our lives together?"

Kneeling beside him, she promised. Seeing that he was still in a serious mood, she said soothingly:

"Let not ungentle doubt knit thy brow. For all

time, and for all eternity, I give myself to thee absolutely and without reserve."

"And I bind my soul to cherish and love thee always. Thou art a jewel imbedded in my very heart's core. Hast thou a wish in my power to grant?"

She stroked his temples gently for a moment, and then said:

"Thou art both skilled and learned, and I delight in thy achievements. Hast thou shown all thy quality? Thou art as modest as a violet, but thou hast said that thou wilt do much to please me. Make me to know thy handiwork, and it shall be to me above rubies."

It was such artless flattery that Yermah promised with swelling pride and an inward conviction that his every thought and wish would find a quick response and ready sympathy in her companionship.

After this they talked but little, much of their time being spent in the strange silent awe of perfect love.

With a pretty show of confidence which thrilled Yermah, Kerœcia lifted his disengaged hand and carried it to its fellow, which was yet about her waist, and of her own accord added slightly to the pressure. Baffled by the subtle change of expression which accompanied this movement, Yermah asked quickly:

"What is it, loved one?"

"I feel securely sheltered from all the world," she said, "when thy strong arms enfold me. I wonder if thou canst realize what a complete haven I feel that I have in thee?"

"Not more than I find in thy sweet mind, thy pure soul, and thy warm heart," he answered, as he kissed her forehead, eyes and lips.

He had taken her fully into his protecting care. She leaned on him without restraint and suffered her eyelids to droop for a moment. Gradually both of them yielded to a sense of weariness — a reaction inevitable from the tension of the previous days.

Drowsiness came on apace, but sleep claimed Yermah an instant only. With a tenderness akin to holiness, he occupied himself with Kerœcia's comfort. He was completely subdued by her helplessness, and she was in every sense sacred to him.

"She trusts me," he whispered softly, as he observed the relaxation of her pose.

In his gentleness and solicitude, there was that incipient quality indicated which would make him a kind and indulgent father.

She was to him still such a wonderful being that he was intensely interested in her personality. Curious as a boy with a new toy, he longed to arouse her, yet hesitated to do so. He felt diffident about touching her. Before he could decide what to do, she had opened her eyes with a start.

"Beloved, I thought thou hadst left me," she murmured, only half-awake.

"No. I am still beside thee. We have both been in dreamland, but thou art more laggard than I."

"I am much refreshed," she said, apologetically. "Thou wilt pardon my neglect?"

"I, too, am renewed," he answered, stroking her hair affectionately.

* * * * * * *

"Thou wilt not forget me when thou art engrossed with affairs of state?" she asked wistfully, as they

stood together in the twilight taking leave of each other.

He was to go away at daybreak the following morning, and she clung to him in longing farewell.

"Remember this," he answered, taking her face in his hands, and looking deep into her eyes: "Nothing can for one moment blot out thy dear image. The first thought of the day, the last thought of the night is of thee."

"Thou art my whole desire and inspiration. Memory serves thee faithfully. May the energy of the cosmos conserve thy strength of purpose, thy health and happiness," was Kerœcia's reply.

"To Him who was in the beginning, and shall endure to the end without mutation or change, I commend my sweet love. May angels of content hover over thee, Kerœcia, my treasure!"

A tender, lingering embrace, a shower of kisses on eyelids and lips, and then the princess stood alone, straining her eyes into the dark, trying to retain a glimpse of her departing lover.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

THE JEWEL BOOK AND WHAT CAME OF IT

ON the way home, and for days after his arrival at Tlamco, Yermah thought of what he should do to please Kerœcia. She had said that she wanted to know of all his handiwork and achievements, so he studied out a plan to fulfill her wishes.

Being a master in metallurgy, a skillful artificer, and an expert diamond lapidary, he decided to make her a tablet of stones, which should be a book of his life, confident that she understood the language of the genii, since her father's court copied the letters used in their cuneiform writing from the arrow-head crystals imprisoned in sapphires.

Yermah's belief was that gold, silver and the precious stones had but one foundation in nature. They were simply augmentative thought, purified and perfected through the operation of magnetic life. This power was invisible and unattainable under ordinary circumstances, and unknown to all except the alchemist.

With him all yellow gems and gold were appropriate to wear for Sunday, either to draw down propitious influences or to avert antagonistic effects.

On Monday, pearls and white stones (not diamonds) were worn, because this is the day of the moon, the second power in nature.

Tuesday, the day of Mars, claimed rubies and all crystallization of a fiery luster.

Wednesday was the day of the turquoise, sapphire and all species of stones which seem to reflect the blue vault of heaven, and to imply the lucent azure of the spiritual atmosphere where the sylphs dwell — those elementals who are always striving to communicate with mortals, because they desire immortality.

Thursday demanded amethysts, and richly colored stones of sanguine tint, because the day is correlated to the male divine sacrifice.

Friday, Venus's day, had emeralds and reigned over all green stones.

On Saturday, diamonds, signifying the great deep, were worn, because Saturn's rule is death to the physical, but birth to the spiritual nature.

"The first effect abides as long as the thing remains," said the Dorado to Alcamayn, as they examined and assorted some uncut turquoises brought from the mines in the Cerrillos Mountains, in New Mexico, then a flournishing Toltec settlement.

Opals came from Zinapan, pearls from La Paz, emeralds from Peru, and diamonds from Brazil, while the rubies had been lately sent from Montana by Orondo. There were beautiful sapphires from the Caucasus, secured by barter with Kerœcia's people.

"All things material have a proper form," answered Alcamayn, "and are subject to certain conditions. Gems, being material, derive virtue from a specific shape, and are likewise subject to the influence of the planets."

"I require four stones for my purpose, and will see to it that the symbol engraved has the same quality as the stone itself, in order that its strength may be doubled," continued Yermah.

"To be efficacious, this book must be made by election," rejoined Alcamayn. "Each stone must be worked at the hour its particular planet's position is strongest. This will prolong the good aspect forever, unless the stone is broken."

"The sapphire reflects the blue of heaven, and belongs to the Bull," explained Yermah, critically examining some polished gems, having arrow-head crystals standing out in startling distinctness in the prismatic colors. Sometimes they appeared in clouds, again in fields, shifting their scenes as often as he changed the focus. "This shall be placed in a square of gold."

"The house of the Twins requires an agate, which is the natal stone of the priestess Kerœcia," observed Alcamayn, handing the Dorado a beautifully marked moss-agate.

"Let that be placed in the gold below the sapphire. The emerald pictures the depth of the sea, and is the delight of its parent, the Light Bringer. It shall be in the third place."

"The first gem for the blue square is a topaz," said Alcamayn, "which rules the Lion, thy house of nativity."

"This pale pink coral, with its delicate leaf-work, shall be its companion. It is of our common country, and will out-tongue my feeble words in its own behalf," the Dorado continued.

"Here is a dewdrop laden with sunbeams," said the little jeweler enthusiastically, as he opened a

square of maguey fiber, and disclosed a first-water brilliant.

"Equilibrated love could have no better exponent," assented Yermah, sharing his enthusiasm. "The bow and dart are here at rest in the sign Libra, where the Lord of Day begins his journey through the nether world. This sparkling thing shall find rest beside the coral branch fresh from the brine of Atlantis."

"The scarlet block must have a fiery opal, and I have here an exquisite finding, recently brought from the Toltec kingdom," exclaimed the jeweler.

"This shall typify the sting of the scorpion, which is the separation forced upon us. Its changing hues shall be to her a sign that three lunations more complete my exile, and then comes joyous union. Put this in the first place, and with it a turquoise for the present time, when all my thought is of thee," he continued, unmindful of Alcamayn's presence. "The ruby mirrors my imprisoned soul, which awaits release into the sunshine of thy love."

Alcamayn was looking over a handful of garnets. Finally he found a suitable one, and laid it at the top of the purple square.

"This shall be the opening page," said Yermah; "and I will so cunningly fashion it that Kerœcia shall go with renewed zest from one chapter to another. When she has my whole life spread out before her, I shall conceal the spring, so that she may not close it again. It will be to her a pledge of constancy."

"I like not this amethyst," commented Alcamayn, "but we have no other stone large enough."

"The sign of the fishes is well represented by a

pearl," rejoined Yermah. "Hast thou black and white gems sufficient in size?"

"Here is one of each, ovum-shaped and perfect. Thou canst fashion the fishes of the amethyst and set the two pearls between."

"A square of jasper gives promise of fulfillment. As the verdant earth responds to the warming rays of the sun newly come out of the region of cold and darkness, so man's heart is warmed into life by love. Canst thou make room for me among the lapidaries?" he asked, turning to Alcamayn in direct appeal. "I desire to work with these materials myself."

"Wilt thou grant me leave to make thee comfortable here? Thou mayst command me in all things," said Alcamayn, proud of his knowledge of the craft, and flattered because he had been consulted in a matter so personal and delicate.

They were in the treasure-room of Iaqua, and it was not long before Yermah had a temporary work-shop improvised in a corner where he had a good light, but was screened from observation.

In addition to a copper wheel and the necessary tools, there was a vessel filled with a carbonate of a brownish-green, opaque color, porous like pumice, and as hard as a diamond, which he used for polishing and cutting. An emery-wheel and a ewer of olive oil were also at hand.

The Dorado spent a portion of each day in this work-shop, and while employed at his labors of love, he either hummed or whistled the plaintive melody Kerœcia had sung for him.

The gold plates which Yermah had so dexterously contrived were put together on the principle of a

screen, in four sections, containing three stones each, set solid. The first strip was of purple enamel, the second gold, the third blue, the fourth red. At the four cardinal points were squares of gold, with stone intaglios.

When folded, the east and west formed a clasp, which had a spring concealed on the reverse side.

As soon as Kerœcia received the tablet of stones, she dispatched Ben Hu Barabe and Alcyesta to Tlamco with a pair of golden eagles for Yermah. These birds were carefully trained in falconry, and were highly prized because of their sagacity, courage and skill. She also sent him the filmy muslin square with its broken and tangled threads, just as he had left it. With it went a diamond ring set with brilliants all the way around. She obeyed the request accompanying the tablet, and did not open it until the three days specified had elapsed, being careful, also, to observe the exact time named.

It was Yermah's first attempt at telepathy; but as Kerœcia turned the key in the elaborately carved ivory box, she felt his thought distinctly. She spoke and acted as if he were actually present.

A delicate odor of jasmine filled the room, and Kerœcia was so eager and nervous that she fumbled clumsily with the neatly rolled maguey fiber, thin and soft as a spider's web, on which the accompanying message was written.

"The book has two parts," said Suravia, when Kerœcia uncovered a thick gold wheel having depressed spokes and a hub which acted as an upright standard. The representation was perfect, and on what corresponded to the felloes were the blossom

and leaf of the *siempra viva* in an elaborately chased design.

"How thoughtful and delicate!" exclaimed Kerœcia, as she recognized the flower, and recalled the occasion of its choice.

"Press the spring in the clasp, and then my life is before thee as an open book," she read, looking at the three uppermost stones in the closed tablet.

"This is the language of the genii!" she cried, "and has a pearl, an amethyst, and a garnet."

"Which means modesty, sincerity and constancy," declared Mineola, who was of the party.

"Sincerity of speech and freedom from slanderous thoughts," continued Kerœcia. "Wisdom, courage, patience, and the power to keep those who serve loyal. Fidelity in every engagement —"

"Where seest thou this?" asked Suravia, looking intently, but unable to distinguish so much.

"I know not," answered Kerœcia. "The divine gift of song is also here, with a low sweet voice and love of home for my portion."

"Seest thou this flying eagle with an arrow in its claws?" asked Mineola, pointing to the green jade intaglio, on a square at the top.

"His thought is always of me," murmured Kerœcia. "See how perfect the polish and how exquisite the cutting."

"The bottom has a black onyx square with an altar and fire," said Suravia, gazing curiously at the opposite end.

"This will keep the heart cheerful and merry, because it foretells deathless union —"

"Be merciful to our curiosity, by touching the

spring which conceals the other chapters," cried both girls in a breath.

"I cannot tell why — but I feel as if something were going to happen. How strange the light is!"

The priestess still held the tablet in her hand, but went to the window and looked out. "Dost thou not think a storm is approaching?"

"Let us put back the curtains which keep out the light," said Suravia, suiting the action to the word.

"Low-hanging clouds oppress the upper air. But this is nothing."

"Thou hast no cause for apprehension," said Mineola, kindly. "Thou hast all the world to make thee content."

Thus gently urged, Kerœcia came back to the table, accidentally setting the gold wheel in motion as she approached.

"Dost thou notice that the square indentations in the inner circle of the wheel are the same size as the top and bottom?" asked Suravia, intent on her discovery.

"And dost thou see that the clasps are the same size?" asked Alcyesta, whose quick eye had already noted the resemblance.

Kerœcia was still pale and unaccountably agitated. Finally she said, with her thumb on the spring:

"I am face to face with Fate! But — Yermah loves me, so why should I fear?"

She pressed the spring and the screen spread out instantly. In the center was a slip of parchment, on which was written: *"When once my heart opens unto thy loving touch, never again canst thou close it."*

Woman-like, they all exclaimed at once, and were in a flutter of excitement over the beauty of workmanship, the flight of fancy, and the loving sentiments expressed in this novel fashion.

"Did I not tell thee the squares would fit into the wheel?" demanded Suravia, when she finally managed to make herself heard.

"Let us try it," said Kerœcia. "Thou art right. It fits perfectly. The tablet is square, but the wheel is circular, which is in itself a great mystery with the Azes."

The priestess blushed scarlet as she realized that she had betrayed her study of Yermah's religion.

"Tell us about it," demanded both auditors, eagerly.

"To circle the square, means to find the perfect way of living," she answered.

"And he means to say that his life with thee will be perfect? He is the square, thou art the circle?"

"It were more worthily put the other way," answered Kerœcia, touched by his tenderness and devotion.

"See the clasps," said Mineola. "At the eastern point is a man's figure with a bull's head, holding a spear over his left shoulder, from which hangs a hare."

"What a quaint, odd symbol of himself!" said Kerœcia, smiling.

"Placed opposite the balances, it will keep his beloved in health and preserve her from despair," said Suravia.

"Why sayest thou balances?" asked Kerœcia.

"Dost thou not see that the stones corresponded to the zodiac? The diamond blazes like the sun in a

clear sky," answered Suravia, pointing to the blue square.

"I have only eyes for this beautiful hyacinth in the opposite clasp. It looks as if smoke were rising from it. Now it glows like a burning coal," cried Mineola.

"Cut deep in its smooth surface is a woman with her arms asunder, like a cross, and having a triangle on her head," commented Kerœcia.

"The stone is in the house of the Lamb, the beginning and renewal time of Nature. Therefore, art thou given refreshing sleep and quick recovery from fatigue," returned Mineola.

"The desire and thought of both is centered on the altar."

Kerœcia was speaking to herself, and lightly touching the blocks with their intaglios marking the four cardinal points.

"Thou art right in adoring him," declared Suravia, enthusiastically. "In the first block of gold is a sapphire, meaning that the language of this book is the same as that thy childhood knew; and the agate below it is thy birth-stone."

"The emerald underneath both has a perfectly straight and smooth surface; so there shall be no darkening shadows thrown over thee," said Mineola.

"The topaz and coral in the next block pertain to thy future home; and the diamond placed under them symbolizes the water which surrounds it," read Suravia.

"It will also be thy home — and thine too, Mineola. I cannot be happy parted from thee."

Each one of the girls affectionately embraced and kissed her in turn.

"The ruby contains an imprisoned soul," said Mineola, looking again at the tablet. "There is a perfect asterisk in the center. How tender! How beautiful! How sweet is the language of love! He intends to say that his heart awaits the freeing touch of thy devotion to release it from apathy, and warm it into life. Thou art indeed blest and fortunate."

"Thou shalt not read backward," declared Suravia. "The first stone in the red ground is an opal. It must bring a precious message, since it is the only gem which man cannot imitate."

"It has a changeable character, and is in a moving sign —"

A piercing scream from Kerœcia startled them, and before either companion could prevent it, she fell to the floor in a deathlike swoon. Mineola ran to the courtyard, where a water jar, overgrown with green timothy, swung from the portico, and brought back a gourdful of ice-cold water. Suravia knelt beside Kerœcia and sprinkled her face liberally.

"Speak to thy handmaiden," she cried. "Speak, I beseech thee!"

In their excitement they did not notice that the room was suddenly growing dark, and that the cool, moist air had become close and stifling.

"Use the fan gently," said Suravia, with a sharp, peremptory ring in her voice. Mineola made no answer. She was praying.

Kerœcia recovered her senses with a start. She seemed dazed for a moment; then she sat bolt upright, gasping for breath pitifully.

"What has distressed and hurt thee so?" asked Mineola with quivering lips, kneeling beside her and offering support.

The sound of a voice seemed to recall Kerœcia's wandering senses.

"O God! Give me courage!" was her agonized cry. "My beloved is vowed to celibacy, and I must die!"

"What sayest thou?"

"Kerœcia, what dost thou mean?"

"Tell us fully," they both said at once.

"Didst thou not see? In the opal — It was so from the beginning! O Thou Merciful One, take thy wretched servant! What have I done? Shame everlasting is my portion!"

"Why did he not tell thee of his vow?" asked Suravia, a note of rising indignation in her voice.

"How could he? I am to blame. He would not humiliate and degrade me before my people."

She gave way to a paroxysm of heart-breaking grief, while Mineola, weeping in sympathy, sought to console her.

Suravia went back to the tablet. The opal was entirely opaque; not a particle of its fire and sparkle was visible.

"I will see what the other stones have to reveal. The sensitive turquoise, the forget-me-not of gems, lives and suffers as we do. It has the power of reproduction, and by its employment the Dorado intended to express a hope for the future. But this symbol of youth, love and tenderness seems to have shriveled in size, and has turned to a sickly green. Beside it is the sympathetic ruby faded to a pale coral. Misfortune —"

A sharp, swaying, rocking movement, sending the windowpanes to the ground with a crash, and throwing the women against each other violently, blanched

their faces and caused them to cling together for support. A deafening explosion followed, and then the cry of her panic-stricken people aroused Kercœcia.

"Run for thy lives!" shouted a voice in the street. "The mountains are smoking and spitting fire! Quick! quick! quick! Run!"

They barely escaped in time to miss the falling walls. In the streets an indescribable scene was being enacted.

What is now known as Lassen Peak sent up a long fiery column, and the earth heaved and groaned under the exertion.

Ashes, smoke and lava began pouring down the sides of the peak, and there was a mad rush of wild animals, coming to man in their mute helplessness from the rocking mountains hemming in the little valley.

Suddenly the gloom was lighted by a meteoric shower, which for an hour made the heavens blaze in a magnificent electrical display. A terrific crash of thunder followed, then an ominous rumble, ending in a long groan which seemed to rend the bosom of the trembling earth.

Red-hot stones and burning cinders fell like a storm of fire upon the whole surrounding country. Land surfaces subsided and rose again like immense chests in regular and lusty breathing. The rubble walls and battlements of the pavilion fell as a pack of cards.

A second shock leveled every house, and brought trees and rocks crashing down the mountain sides, dealing death and destruction everywhere. The whole artillery of the heavens was in action, drown-

ing the feeble cries of man, dying terror-stricken in the heaps of ruins.

Lizards, snakes, rats, mice, and moles raced madly in every direction, while timid owls and other birds flew close to the ground and screeched in their fright and bewilderment. The larger animals huddled close together, while the dogs howled dismally.

A little handful of men and women, surviving the first terrific shocks, attempted to escape over the lower range of hills, but, to their horror, a yawning gulf opened at their feet.

Moving in sinister majesty and strangeness, was a bottomless abyss, impassable in width and several miles long. Before their very eyes, it swallowed up human beings, houses and forests, grinding and crushing them between its gigantic jaws. With another terrific wrench, it belched them up again, followed by a deluge of steam, mud and hot water.

The river lying below Anokia had deserted its natural bed, driven before the avalanche of lava, and the sea of mud, vapor, gas, black smoke and effluvia showed where it had forever disappeared through a crevice.

A thick shower of ashes filled the air. The earth undulated and quivered for a few seconds, and then a tempest of lightning and hail cleared the suffocating atmosphere.

In the lurid flashes could be seen the oscillation forth and back as if the very heart of Mount Lassen were being torn out. Its black vomit, streaked with red, trailed like a snake over the floor of the valley, setting fire to the combustible wreckage, and stealing up the base of the peak as well.

Kerœcia led her little band of devoted followers

up the high mountain walling in the western side of the valley. The subterranean rumblings sounded in her ears like the drum-beating on stumps of trees or logs done by the wings of male pheasants when they are calling to their females.

"I hear not the call of a mate. It is death — and thou art welcome!" she said, turning a pale but composed face to the burning heights.

"Thou hast heard my prayer!" she continued, stretching out her arms in supplication. "Thou hast granted me the purification by fire! Thy spirit laughs and licks out long tongues of flame straight from thy fiery throat! Thy countenance is wreathed with smiles, for me, O Death! But if consistent with thy will, spare these children of the forest. They share not my humiliation, degradation and despair."

A hissing, howling hurricane stormed and raged around them. With a convulsive lurch the ground underneath shivered, and finally the elevation on which they stood was rent in twain from top to bottom.

One half collapsed and fell in, while through the kettle-shaped opening in the valley swept a flood of mud, scoria and molten lava, which completely submerged the burning ruins. The rain fell in a solid sheet, but now the hot air and steam rising from below tortured them with heat.

Suddenly a dog, maddened with terror, leaped into the seething cauldron, and its cry was stifled by a sizzling, crackling sound, as the poor creature was crisped to a cinder.

Those who clung to life made frantic leaps over the frightful precipice to the other side, only to be

dashed to pieces in the valleys below. The whole district was overwhelmed with lava and hot water pouring out from the lesser peaks around the center of activity. Despite the gales of wind and the heavy downpour, sulphur and other noxious gases permeated the upper air, so that long before the lava crept up and ingulfed them, death by suffocation overtook the wretched remnant.

In their extremity the people obeyed Kerœcia implicitly, and many touching exhibitions of heroism marked their last moments. They huddled together at the root of a sequoia gigantea, newly wrenched out of the ground. Nor did they refuse shelter to a grizzly bear, a mountain lion, some wolves, some wild sheep, a colony of snakes, nor the birds hovering in the air, screeching in abject terror or stupefied beyond resistance.

The twisting, crackling swish of the trees, the thundering clatter of the rocks shaken loose, and bounding downward with prodigious velocity, passed unnoticed by the martyrs looking at death, calmed and awed by the terribly destructive fury of animated nature.

Kerœcia gathered Suravia and Mineola in her arms protectingly, and waited for the end. Up to the very last she sought to comfort and console her companions, so worn with fatigue and excitement that they made no further effort.

Some had already crossed the dark waters; others were gasping their last, when death touched her — and she slept.

With the passing of her spirit, Kerœcia groaned as she remembered how she sat at the spindle, and of the answering look she then gave Yermah.

To the everlasting honor and glory of womankind be it said, that she never sinks so low in the moral scale as to be indifferent to the opinion of the man she loves. Loss of his respect crushes and kills — not the physical, but all that is essentially woman in her nature.

Showered with affectionate appreciation, she reaches her highest development; for love is as necessary to her growth as is sunshine to a plant. Denied it, woman can at best but droop and die.

Since learning that Yermah was not free to espouse her, Kerœcia was appalled and overwhelmed with the knowledge that she had allowed him to surprise her secret thoughts — to guess accurately at future possibilities.

"It is not true," she murmured. "Yermah, my beloved, think not that I have the heart of a wanton! Forgive —"

But there was no answering voice to cry out in return — no one to assure the breaking heart that her love was a priceless treasure — no one to make her see that every emotion was fully appreciated and understood. So the sunshine went out of another life when the breath left Kerœcia's body.

* * * * * * *

Yermah had named the day and hour when Kerœcia should examine the tablet of stones, to enable him to put himself in communication with her mentally. For three days he kept the door of his private sanctuary closed; but at the hour named he knelt before the shrine and fixed his mind intently upon Kerœcia.

He smiled softly to himself as he realized that she had opened the ivory casket, that she was examining

the workmanship, that she comprehended the significance of the square within the circular wheel.

Now she has touched the clasp, and her eyes are greedily drinking in the beauty of the groupings while her senses are thrilled with their message. In his rapture he goes with her, step by step.

"She is pleased with the coral-bound island of my birth," he murmured, "and she gets some idea of her future home.— Thou art right, Mineola, my soul is in the ruby. I have laid my heart bare. Look long and earnestly, Kerœcia; thou art welcome to know its secret places. The opal will tell thee how soon release comes. Thou must not be frightened at its suddenness. Three more lunations separate us. Then to Atlantis, where —"

He was wrenched violently and pitched face downward to the floor by the sudden impact of Kerœcia's agonized thought.

"Thou art mistaken!" he cried aloud. "The changing character of the opal must speak to thee. Thy thought dishonors me, for I love thee truly! The vow binds me *not* for all time. Look again, beloved!"

To his finely attuned senses came the knowledge of her anguish and sorrow. He choked and smothered under it. Mentally, he heard her piercing shriek.

"O Unseen Divinity! Hear and be gracious to thy distressed servants!" he supplicated, rising to a kneeling position. "O Powers of Air! Convey my thoughts clearly! Make her to see!" Something of the horror of the situation flashed over him. "O Earth yield now thy hidden treasure! Give gold in abundance, that I may fly to her side. Re-

lease me, O Brotherhood! I will not be longer bound —"

Without sensing it, Yermah had broken the spirit of his vow!

The door of the sanctuary stood open, but his ordinary faculties were dormant, while his subjective consciousness sought to penetrate the gloom ingulfing Kerœcia. He did not hear approaching footsteps, nor did his wandering senses respond when a light tap sounded on the door, nor did he see the face peering in at him.

"He kneels before Orion," said Alcamayn hurriedly, as Akaza approached. "Thou wilt find him distraught already."

"Hasten back to the Observatory and have the bells tolled to quiet the alarm showing itself among the people," said Akaza in dismissal. "Soon the dread visitation will be upon us, and it were gentle to forewarn them."

Akaza had been making observations night and day since Yermah's return from Anokia. He had said little, but his face was set and stern, like one in deep trouble. He made a peculiar rat-tat! on the lintils of the sanctuary with his fingers, which brought Yermah to the doorway.

"A sign of great portent is in the heavens," began Akaza, after a mute salutation. "When the sun is passing from Libra to Capricorn is a season prolific in visitations from outer space. The fiery messengers come near the sun at that time. Dost thou remember the night in the cave?"

"Memory serves me well," answered Yermah, unable to concentrate his attention. "Is the visitant of the usual complexion and order?"

"It is a burning coal, red and glowing. Its face is like a double crescent, and it is a formidable rival to the sun in size. It comes retrograde with the constellation Orion rising. Its illuminated hair floats over one half of the zenith, and is not quite on a straight line opposite the sun. It pulsates as though it had been agitated by the wind, and is curved like a threatening saber.

"To-day, it will pass through the plane of the earth's orbit, and when it meets the influence of the new moon, it will be in sore affliction with Venus. In this condition it comes under the influence of Mars. It will then disperse that planet's cohesive strength and there will be war in the earth's interior between uncontrolled water and fire.

"All the planets in our system afflict and oppose each other so that the waters of the sea and the winds of heaven will be lashed into furious activity."

"What means this sudden clangor of bells?" asked Yermah, now fully aroused to the commotion in the courtyard outside.

"It is a solemn convocation to call the affrighted people together to watch and pray, while the sign hangs suspended behind the dying sun," answered Akaza, hurrying after him. "Many times of late the orb of day has gone to rest in a bed of blood, but to-night the red glow comes from another quarter. The scourge is upon us, Yermah, and the hour of thy trial is at hand."

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

YERMAH BECOMES ONE OF THE WHITE STAR BROTHERHOOD

YERMAH did not hear him. He had caught a glimpse of the comet hanging low over the Golden Gate — a double crescent of fire joined together. Its tail bent out over Tlamco, and curved downward like a great broad-sword. It throbbed and panted like a living thing, sinister and awful, as Venus twinkled between its two horns, an evening star of horrible aspect.

A tremor, ominous and indefinable, seized the populace, hushed and awed by the dreadful apparition. It was a premonition, followed instantly by a low, rumbling sound, an angry roar of waters, and then the earth shook under them like a leaf in the wind. A mad rush for the streets, an instinctive huddling together, a breathless wait for a second impact!

A heavy, long boom, like a roll of distant artillery, and a wave mountain high, but crested in the center like a spine, rose up between them and the Golden Gate, and, for a moment, shut out from view the grinning, mocking comet.

The ground surged up and down under their feet in simultaneous waves. Trees bent over and touched their tops together, houses rocked and swayed, and all that was breakable in them went down with a crash.

Living close to the heart of Nature, her moods were not mysterious to these people; so, they waited for the third, and what they supposed would be the final shock. It came with such terrible force that the Observatory tower fell in a cloud of blinding dust, and all the other buildings were rent or cracked grievously, but were not over-thrown simultaneously.

A thievish wave stole in silently, and embraced the whole city.

The stricken people looked into each other's faces with dismay, as they stood waist-deep in water, a nameless fear chilling their hearts. The water retreated precipitously, while lurid streaks and tongues of flame lit up the whole eastern heavens. Shock after shock succeeded each other, while the clouds lowered heavy and sullen close overhead. Brokenly, but in unison, thousands of throats lent voice to prayerful entreaty:

"Wilt thou blot us out forever, O Lord? Is this punishment intended not for our reformation, but for our total destruction?"

One impulse seemed to move the entire concourse; and as if Nature heard, she answered by a gust of wind and a downpour of rain.

* * * * * * *

Ben Hu Barabe, Alcyesta and their attendants had a mad gallop for life. They were within an hour's ride of Sacramento River when they saw thin, blue flames suddenly shoot up from the earth, followed by heavy cannonading of the internal elements.

In the cosmic mêlée they were tossed forth and back like a shuttle in a loom — so violently at first that the horses fell to their knees and were whirled in opposite directions. In terror the animals tried to

lie down and roll over with their burdens; but their riders whipped and spurred vigorously, and the maddened creatures ran until they dropped exhausted on the river bank. A thick shower of ashes fell over them, and the air was like a blast from a furnace. Behind them came smoking streaks of lava, poured into the plain by a row of flame-mantled hills.

Flocks were scampering wildly in every direction, and the scattered herdsmen were taking to the boats and skiffs tied along the river bank.

Ben Hu Barabe and Alcyesta climbed into the balsa awaiting them, and their attendants hastened with them. They had scarcely pushed out into midstream, when the very bed of the river seemed to rise and hurl its waters forward. Waves rose in an undulating wall of water, breaking the banks of both sides, sending death and destruction broadcast over the valley. The boats were carried along by an irresistible impulse and with incredible swiftness, straight across sinuous windings of the stream onward toward the sea.

Lightning played over their heads; but the crash of thunder, the explosions of the volcanoes, the mighty heaves and groans tearing the breast of the trembling earth were lost in an angry roar of waters.

A canon-shot would not have sent them forward with greater impetus; and this prevented their boats from swamping, despite their shipping water frightfully.

The shock which leveled the Observatory tower shattered all the windows and cracked every building in Tlamco, letting the accumulated waters through what is now Carquinez Straits, and widened an arm of the sea into an open inlet.

The impounded water inundated the surrounding country, swept over the intervening islands, and spent itself in a series of waves mountain high, whose impact disturbed the ocean's surface for thousands of miles, after severing Lime Point from the peninsula and plowing out the famous Golden Gate entrance to the bay.[1]

One of the most violent tremors caught the little colony of boats, which by a miraculous coincidence, were thrown together in the trough of the sea, and tossed them ashore, high and dry, on the Berkeley hills.

The water receded so rapidly that the boats stuck fast in the débris and mud. All except the strongest one, containing Ben Hu Barabe and Alcyesta, were crushed like egg-shells.

With broken arms and legs, bruised and battered bodies, scarred almost beyond recognition, the little band huddled together, reviving each other when pain brought unconsciousness, while the elements overhead and below them rioted with unabated fury.

The morrow brought no surcease, except that the waters subsided and took on something of their normal aspect. The earth still trembled and groaned, and the sun was so completely obscured for days after, that it seemed always twilight.

So soon does the mind become accustomed to danger — so familiar does it grow with death, that Ben Hu Barabe was able to direct his men how to reach the back waters of the bay, where the motion was less violent and marked.

They helped each other, with tears and gratitude, to some of the fruit and nuts which had been spared

[1] Indian Legend.

to them. Alcyesta's left arm was broken, and she could scarcely move without intolerable pain; but she made no complaint to the half-crazed men about her. None of them could ever tell afterward how they contrived to reach Tlamco.

Heart-rending scenes greeted them everywhere, and many of the frenzied inhabitants rolled convulsively upon the ground. Others accused themselves with frantic insistence of all kinds of crime. Others could not speak. Some were helpless paralytics, and numbers could not retain food, so terrible was the reflex action on the nervous system.

The mind that has passed through such a calamity has lost its tone. Instead of being braced up, as by war, the earth's epilepsy makes the mental fabric flabby, and paralyzes by a hopeless fear from which there is no known refuge. The fluttering soul, tying itself to matter as something solid and enduring, finds that the globe itself is but a poor shivering thing, liable to be taken in some monster demon's clutch and shaken back into its component parts. No language can adequately express the stupendous feeling of instability conveyed by the idea of the earth's possible dissolution and dispersion.

* * * * * * *

Yermah sat in a stupor, and it was with difficulty that he could be aroused when Ben Hu Barabe came to speak to him. He was completely worn out with anxiety and exertion on behalf of his people. At first the Dorado did not recognize his visitor in the semi-darkness. When he finally caught sight of the ravaged and altered face before him, he went almost insane with grief. He had hoped

against hope to the very last. Now he knew without a word that his worst fears were realized.

Six weeks later, when brain-fever loosed its grip upon him, Akaza found Yermah lying face downward at the door of the Temple of Neptune. He was moaning and sobbing piteously. In a half-crazed condition, he had eluded observation, and started out to find his foster-father, but had fallen by the wayside, overcome by sheer bodily weakness. Akaza lifted him up, and hushed him as he would a child.

"Thou art wrong to grieve like this," he said gently and soothingly. "The Father in the Trinity is the Universal Creator; the Son is man himself. Therefore, thou art in essence — God, since thou art in possession of this higher principle and must live."

Yermah was like a maimed lion — a pathetic and pitiable object — as he lay with his head on Akaza's shoulder, while his pent-up feelings found vent in choking sobs.

"Thou art weakening thy sacred manhood in yielding thus to despair. Thou art intrusted with a mission for all peoples, for all tongues, and for all time. Think, my son, of being the world's ideal lover through all the eons to follow! It is a blessed privilege! Thou hast witnessed a demonstration of the destructive majesty of cosmic force. Now thou art called upon to obey thine individual destiny. THOU HAST PERFORMED THE EIGHTH LABOR!"

"And the gold for the temple?" questioned Yermah, in a stricken voice.

"It was alchemical gold thou wert sent to find. Thy body is the temple, and the Perfect Way of

Life is the magic which produces alchemical gold. Dost thou comprehend the occult significance of Osiris, with a crook in one hand and a flail in the other?"

"No," answered the Dorado, more calmly. "Come into the temple and I shall tell thee."

When Yermah followed him, he continued:

"The crook is the attraction to the earth, and the flail is the repulsion from it. Man oscillates continually between the masculine and the feminine qualities of his nature. When Osiris says, 'Let the heart be given back to the deceased'[1] after it has been put into an urn and weighed in the balance against the image of Truth, we are to understand that the candidate is no longer swayed by his emotions and appetites. He is self-centered. Sorrow will lift her pall, and thou wilt stand face to face with Truth."

Akaza drew from his bosom a heavy serpent ring of silver with a rare green jade setting. It had a turquoise with diamond eyes cut intaglio.

"This means Silence," said the old man, as he took Yermah's right hand, and slipped the ring on the little finger. "It is the signet of the Brotherhood, and thou must sacredly guard the divine wisdom imparted to thee.

"Thou wilt be sorely tried in the future; but I, who am responsible for thy soul's welfare, give thee this sign manual of the King Initiate."

Yermah knelt before him, and was anointed on crown, forehead and breast with perfumed oil.

"Rise and receive the Sacred Word. It is 'Aision,' which is Truth. Seen in the distance, this

[1] From the Egyptian Book of the Dead.

quality is personated as stern, harsh, forbidding; but, when we approach near enough to distinguish the lineaments of its countenance, it contains all that is gracious, benignant and inspiring. The Spirit of Truth dwells within the sanctuary of the heart."

Akaza then put his hands together, with the fingers closed and bent so as to form an acute angle. With the tip of his fingers pointed, he touched Yermah's forehead, and said:

"Let there be no complaint."

The joining of the right and left hand signified the union of the masculine and the feminine principles, and of spirit and matter.

It represented the pyramid, the cone, the center, the heart, the ten Sephiroth proceeding from the One; the naught of the ten numerals in the tenfold ratio.

"And I am commanded to get rid of the *my*-ness, as a giant weed whose roots lie deep in the human heart?" said Yermah, slowly.

"Remember always," responded Akaza, glad to see that Yermah's mind was for the moment normal, "that the true self of man is God. Look for it in thy fellows; find it and hold fast to it in thyself. Thou must ponder these things well. I can tell thee what I have experienced and known; but thou wouldst only have my word for it.

"A river cannot rise higher than its source; so, therefore no man ever sees beyond the reflection of himself. First, sense the truth intuitively; then mayst thou examine it at leisure with thine intellect.

"To break the law is identical with breaking the God within thee. Now that thou art one of us, bear in mind that our Brotherhood can only instruct.

We cannot give real knowledge. Experience must do that for thee."

"Experience! thou art a cruel monster! Because of thee am I deprived of my sweet love," said Yermah, giving way to an outburst of grief.

"What sayst thou? Look!"

Yermah raised his head and gazed with streaming eyes at an apparition of Kerœcia, as he had last seen her in life, standing in the eastern entrance.

"She smiles and beckons me!" he said, in an awe-struck whisper. "Oh! my soul, why hast thou forsaken me? Why should death touch thee, and I must live?"

"Death claimed nothing but the physical body," said Akaza, softly. "She feels not its loss. Look at her serene countenance. Wouldst thou spare her pain?"

Yermah cast a reproachful glance at Akaza.

"Canst thou ask the question?"

"Then master and control thy feeling. She can only manifest by absorbing thy magnetism. If thou wouldst see her at will, thou must give of thy strength freely."

"And she does not know that she is out of the body?" asked Yermah, eagerly.

"No. She never will, unless thy indulgence in grief plunges her into the vortex of pain, which is now thy portion."

"By all that I hold sacred — by all I love, hope and fear, she never shall!" exclaimed Yermah, rising.

On his face was the uplifting and exaltation of a saint.

"O Kerœcia! Core of my heart! I am ready

for thy spirit to flutter over me! Never can I be sad with the knowledge of thy sweet presence."

He stood in rapt attention, communing long and silently with the beatific vision. There was not a trace of care in her benign expression. She had solved the mystery and knew the truth.

For such love there is neither time nor death nor space.

Akaza stole away in the dim light, murmuring softly:

"Although a separate entity, she personates the feminine principle dormant in himself. This is what the ideal always does. Through this he will learn to harmonize desire and knowledge, and in time he will see that the grinding out of animal propensities, represented by the ringed planet, has come to him in a form more beautiful than a poet's dream. Kerœcia is the disillusionizer, the dweller on the threshold, the chastening rod. But the hand that smites will also bless him." [1]

[1] Later, in all the distorted legends of Adam Kadmon, the cosmic man,— Woman was accused of causing his fall through lustful desire; and what was originally an allegory of initiation, or of being able to distinguish between the true and the false in the battle-ground of our own hearts, has been perverted into a literal interpretation of dread consequence.
This false idea has degraded millions of men and women.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

AKAZA KEEPS HIS VOW AND IS FINALLY FREE

AS he passed out of the temple, Akaza turned again to look at Yermah whose face was illumined, serene and calm. With his hands clasped before him, the Dorado stood as if in a dream, taking into the inner recesses of his heart the comforting assurance of immortality and of final union with the Divine, in which Kerœcia was a part.

"Farewell, beloved!" said the old man, as his eyes filled. "Thou hast passed the Gates of Light, and art come into thine own. Amenti, thou unknown, receive thy son! Amrah, King of the Brotherhood, give back my vow! I have kept the faith!"

He stood with bowed figure, and seemed to be communing with the Unseen. Presently he lifted his head, and the crowning white hair haloed a dazzling countenance. His lips were parted in a pleased expectancy.

"I am free to go hence," he said, as he turned and walked out with renewed vigor.

Akaza bent his steps toward Ingharep, and when he reached the cave, he went in and made ready for a journey. The blurred, reddened and obscure sun shed but fitful light over the still agitated waters of the Pacific.

The hierophant went out on the rocks jutting into the sea, remnants of which are still visible below the Cliff House of to-day, where he sat gazing long into space. When his strength was fully regained, he hailed the officer on watch in the tower-house of the hill overlooking the point, and was soon swallowed up in the night.

Crossing the bay, he came upon a few refugees from the far north, led by Cezardis, who cried childishly when he encountered for the first time in many days this evidence of any living thing. Running toward Akaza, he kissed and fondled him in his excitement, while the others gave every evidence of thankfulness and joy.

"Tell me all that has befallen thee," said Akaza, holding him at arm's length.

"It would need more than man's allotted time to convey all," answered Cezardis. "Death and destruction are everywhere. A puny chain stands between the main land of the Ians and my country. The peak next the shore opposite, and over which the priestess Kerœcia passed, has fallen into the sea,[1] and all the high mountains are putting forth smoke, ashes and melted rocks. In some places the earth heaves and groans continuously; in other spots, water pours all the time; while hot air makes man and beast labor for breath."

"Ben Hu Barabe and Alcyesta are in Tlamco," said Akaza. "They alone of all the Monbas survived the visitation of the fire-spirits."

"We knew as much from the terrible rocking still going on in their country. The water has deserted the rivers everywhere, and is making new

[1] Aleutian Island chain.

places where it has not sunk into the earth. Didst thou see the dread messenger in the heavens near the place of Venus?"

"Yes; and it will soon make the house of Mars, and then there will be contention in Tlamco."

"How fares Yermah, the beloved of Kerœcia?"

"Thy heart will be wrung by sight of him. Reason fled for many days. But it is decreed otherwise, and he will soon find peace. Farewell! I go to fulfill an obligation," said Akaza, embracing the weary travelers. "Commiseration and surcease of care be thy portion."

"May the Divine bring thee speedily on thy journey!" they said with one accord. "We will pray the Azes to afford us shelter."

"Thy petition will be quickly answered. Thou wilt find them altered and distraught, but in bodily health."

They crowded into the boats kept on the Oakland shores for such emergencies, but in their half-famished condition they made poor headway against the choppy sea.

Akaza went back over much of the same ground traversed in visiting the Yo-Semite Valley. Where possible, he went due east, facing the rising place of the sun. A less stout heart would have been appalled by the devastation and ruin all around him.

The rivers in many places had been lifted out of their courses, and changed about in an almost incomprehensible manner. Mountains and forests no longer afforded shelter to the huge animals of that time.

On his way into Calaveras County, Akaza saw herds of mastodons with their tongues lolled out, in

company with elephants and elk huddled together around a spring of fresh water.

He encountered many a fierce grizzly bear so nearly famished as to be unable to harm him. Wolves and panthers were dead and dying by the hundreds, and the rhinoceros and hippopotami had great raw cracks in their backs because of the extreme heat and the dryness of the atmosphere.

No tongue can picture the thrilling and inspiring condition of the heavens. The mountain peaks continued to send up streams of hot air, which mingling with the cool breezes from the sea, brought about gales and storms of incalculable velocity, with all the drying capacity of a furnace blast. The upper air was an amphitheater of gorgeous electric effects. Streaks of lightning as big as the body of a tree licked out their long tongues, or darted with deadly effect among the ashes and smoke, which rolled in and out over the crest of the Sierras, scattering a sediment broadcast for miles. The heavy cannonading of the upper strata of air could never be compared to the weak peals and crashes of a thunderstorm, and yet not a drop of water fell to ease the sufferings of the creatures who still lived.

"Yermah's prayers have been answered literally," said the old man, as he trudged along, upheld by some hidden force — carried forward by an indomitable purpose. "The gold is being vaporized and brought to the surface in the upheaved quartz and gravel. It has tried to come south toward him, but it cannot escape the rigors of the ice, soon to overtop this region."

He passed close to the great "mother lode," and not far from the mysterious "blue lead," the wonder

and admiration of our pioneer days. But there was no detritus then, no decomposed quartz, no auriferous gravel-beds.

"There will be no faults in these veins," he said, "because the uplifting is simultaneous. And in aftertime the deposits will be accessible to another race of men. They will find our copper mines, but will lose the secret of amalgamation. The first overflow of mud and water has hardened into cement," he continued, examining the deposit critically.

"It is indeed time I were here. Rivers of basaltic lava will follow this, and I must be prepared. Four successive strata will pour over me, and still my grinning skull will be preserved to confound and astonish. The very name of the monastery, Guatavita, the Gate of Life, will incite men to deeds of blood. But thy will be done! I thank Thee that Thou hast given me the power to endure."

Akaza turned to the east, and made a low salaam, and then went into the entrance, now covered over and known as the Natural Bridges of Calaveras County. He performed ablutions in the two rock basins still sitting under the stalactites and arches of the upper bridge and then passed to the lower entrance, a few yards away.

On the east is a high mountain which for a quarter of a mile is supposed to contain innumerable caves. In reality, it is a natural rock temple, very like the Elephantine Caves, and it was here that the American lodge of the Brotherhood kept a record of the entire time man had existed on the earth.

"Twice already has the face of the globe changed by fire, and twice by water," said Akaza; "and each time has a new race been born. The Aryan comes

into leadership by the joint action of both elements."

The hierophant carried a little copper hammer, which he used to tap the various squares of solid masonry closing the entrance, listening each time a stone was struck. Finally a peculiar singing noise reached him, and he reversed the hammer, springing from its side a sharp, dagger-like point of hardened copper. With this he began patiently to pick the glaze which held the blocks of granite in place.

He worked all day taking out the exact squares marked on a curious diagram held in his hand. As night fell, he found himself through the entrance, and inside the temple and monastery.

The incomparable odor of jasmine greeted him, and a light flickered in the distance.

Akaza's heart stood still.

Here for a hundred years no intruding footsteps had entered! The man who lighted the perfumed lamp was long since in spirit life. The hierophant never doubted his ability to accomplish the task imposed upon him, but he trembled with the knowledge that it was so nearly finished.

"*Refreshment awaits thee on the right,*" he read from an inscription on the wall.

Following the direction given, he found an abundance of hulled corn, rice, dried fruits and nuts securely sealed in earthen jars, and there was also one containing garments and other things.

He took the edibles and came back to the arched entrance, where he lighted a fire, and prepared a meal.

"The elements have made my bath ready," he said, dipping his hand into one of the larger basins.

"The water is warm, and I am not insensible to its charms."

When he came out of it he clothed himself in spotless linen, embroidered with orange-colored silk. Around his neck was a collarette of diamonds and black onyx set in gold, from which hung a leaden medal cast in the sign of Saturn, and about his waist was a yellow silk girdle. After he had anointed his hair with an unguent, he gathered some cypress and crowned himself with it.

He was careful to perform every rite before and after eating, and as a sacrifice to fire piled up copal in one of the small basins, and ignited it by the friction of two hardwood sticks. While it burned he smoked; after which he allowed tired nature to drift into a short but deep sleep.

Roused by an extra heavy shock of earthquake, he gathered up the remnants of food, his discarded garments and prayer-rug, and threw them into the burning basin piece by piece, until all were in ashes.

Wherever possible, the firelight cast weird shadows against the beautiful stalactites still hanging.

These novel instruments responded in sweetest melodies to Akaza's magical touch.

The hierophant used a rod made from a perfectly straight almond branch, just before the tree was in blossom. It was hollowed and filled with a needle of iron, which was magnetized. A many-sided prism cut into a triangle was fastened to one end, with a black resin figure of the same at the other. In the middle of the rod, which was the length of the arm, and wrapped in silk, were two rings — one of red copper, the other of zinc.

On the extremity which ended in the resin triangle, the rod was gilded; the other end was silvered to the central rings. On the copper ring was a mystical word, and another also on the one made of zinc. This rod had been consecrated by the last initiate at Guatavita, and had not been seen by any one since.

The sounds evoked grew more and more weird and peculiar, and Akaza's exertions became more and more violent, until he dropped exhausted near the basin, where only a few sparks smoldered.

From a chamois wallet he took bits of assafœtida, alum, and sulphur, and threw them on the heated coals. As their combined fumes permeated the air, he touched a spring in the side of one of the marble basins, and a thin, smooth slab slipped out.

Hastily covering it with a chamois skin, he produced writing materials from the jar which had contained the robe he wore, and prepared to write. He had scarcely seated himself on an overturned stone before he was entranced.

"Thy Brother in Lassa, on the Brahmaputra, sends thee greeting!

"All save the high regions of the Himalayas, where our monastery is situated, are sorely pressed by raging flood.

"The heavens have opened. The plains with their chains of mountains, rivers, lakes and inland seas, have been suddenly heaved up.

"Fire lurks in the hidden depths, and the beds of the sea vibrate and tremble. Its waves hide islands and continents in its abysses.

"The sun's rays drink up the scattered waters,

and pour them down again, mingling with the rivers and the ocean.

"They cover the plains, filling the valleys, roaring around the fire mountains, hollowing out the slopes, and surging up to their summits. In it are swallowed flocks and pasturage, forests and wild beasts, fields and crops, towns and hamlets, with myriads of mortals."

Akaza held the rod to his forehead, and sent an answering message, detailing fully all that had happened here.

"Sign and seal thy parchment, and restore to its hidden place. The spirit of fire hovers near thee. Prepare to go out in peace. Thy pilgrimage is at an end.

"Thou art in the place of destruction, and Truth will hide her face there until thou art again incarnate. May thy birth into light be speedy and joyful.

"Accept the love of thy brother and servant,

"Kadmon the Patriarch."

Akaza put the manuscript into a jar and sealed it, and with infinite pains closed the steplike opening through which he had entered Gautavita. Then, realizing that he had received his last summons, he laid him down peacefully to sleep.[1]

[1] In the year 1866, a miner found Akaza's skull, while sinking a shaft in a strata of gravel one hundred and thirty-seven feet below the surface. It was in a beautiful flat, about fifteen miles north of Table Mountain, a mass of basaltic lava, six hundred feet thick, which was not erupted until after Akaza's death.

The skull no longer surmounted that last nudity of man which instinct bids us conceal in the Earth. It was coated with a deposit of gravel and sand, that told of its lying in a river bed while mountains were worn to plains, and the decomposed quartz and loose gravel were plowed up by glacial ero-

sion, and scattered over the hillsides. The skull was broken in its strongest part, an evidence of the force with which some torrent had dashed it against bowlders in the lapsing centuries.

Some time during its wanderings in the river beds, or while resting on the banks, a snail had crawled under the malar bone and died. Its shell was found there, and no such species of snail has been known since the volcanoes ceased pouring lava over California.

The skull[1] and the snail-shell have been the cause of great discussion among the scientists of our epoch: Its age is too great to agree with the preconceived idea of man's existence.

[1] Calaveras skull, Smithsonian Institution.

CHAPTER TWENTY

THE DORADO FACED UTTER NEGATION OF SELF

IN returning to Iaqua from the temple, Yermah stopped to inspect the work being done by a company of warrior-priests on the cracked and broken wall surrounding the public gardens. These men had already restored the aqueducts, so that danger of a water famine no longer threatened Tlamco.

The still terrified populace were totally incapable of consecutive action. Not one of them doubted that the destructive agencies at work would blot them out. All of the secular temples were crowded constantly, and the voice of prayer and supplication rose above the low rumblings still going on in the earth.

Death played sad havoc with women burdened with motherhood, and the priestesses and vestals were overworked in their efforts to take care of the motherless, whose pinched and frightened faces peered from everywhere.

The people were too stupefied to formulate any definite plans for themselves, and lived in hourly expectation of a final summons.

Military discipline, instituted by Akaza, prevented frenzied acts of self-destruction, while the fleet of balsas found it necessary to protect the granaries and stores.

The first upheavals produced some curious phe-

nomena in the honeycombed hillsides containing the jars and baskets. After being buried for a quarter century, many of the former were thrown up on the surface with such force as to break and scatter their contents hopelessly. The baskets were also tossed and rolled about in a surprising manner.

By right of seniority, Setos assumed command of the land forces, while Hanabusa coöperated heartily from the sea.

The Observatory tower was a complete wreck, and there was no way of predicting changes of weather, the knowledge of which added much to the horror of the situation. It was a nameless, undefined dread — a something they could not determine, which appalled and overwhelmed even the stout-hearted.

For the first time since his bereavement, Yermah showed an interest in his surroundings. His heart was wrung by the scenes about him, but it was no longer a self-centered grief.

"Our Dorado is beginning to share the woes of his fellows," said one of the bystanders as he approached. "He no longer walks apart speechless with sorrow. Let us greet him as of old."

The crowd uncovered and shouted: "Haille! Haille! Haille!" so weak and feebly that the sound seemed to die in their throats. Yermah was too much moved for words, but he made a pitiful effort to smile, as he raised his hands in benediction in return.

"Peace be with thee!" they answered, trying manfully to conceal their anxieties and fears.

"Yermah!" called a familiar voice. "Give thy servant greeting."

"Orondo! Brother in all save blood —"

The Dorado staggered and would have fallen had not Orondo caught and embraced him.

"Thy hollow, wasted cheeks and thy shrunken frame pierce my heart like a dagger!" cried Orondo, while the tears ran unrestrained down his weather-beaten face. "Anxiety and fear for thee urged me here. Speak! — Surely thou wilt not snap the slender thread!" he continued, alarmed at Yermah's silence. He held the Dorado up, searching his haggard countenance anxiously.

"Long have I stood within the shadow," murmured Yermah feebly, struggling to overcome great weakness. "The body refuses to support the spirit in manifesting joy in seeing thee — Thy pardon —"

"No need of words 'twixt thee and me," answered Orondo.

"Thy heart is like a crystal spring, and I know its full depths."

Orondo's strong right arm upheld the Dorado, but his prompt, soldier-like habit stood him in good stead. By a nod he beckoned to the warrior-priests waiting, to bring forward a palanquin, which they had gone into the temple to procure. Gently as a woman could have done, he seated the Dorado and motioned the attendants to go on.

Yermah's look of gratitude made his strong chin tremble, and brought the old haunted expression back to his face. A cold, clammy perspiration stood out on Yermah's lips and brow as he sank back utterly exhausted. When he closed his eyes, Orondo said to himself: "He will never be paler in death. Poor heart-broken soul!"

Orondo had a good profile view as he trudged

beside the chair. He observed the ravages that illness of body and mind had wrought, and wondered in a vague sort of way if he could not share some of his own vitality.

Loyalty forbade direct speech, but he had learned from others enough to understand the situation. His owns wounds bled anew, but they were rated second in comparison.

"Thy master has need of sleep," he said to the attendants as Yermah was carried into the private apartments. "Should solicitude find utterance, tell him that I am waiting his pleasure in my old quarters."

Wandering through familiar rooms, he was able to estimate the effect of constant shaking on walls and ceilings. He saw many evidences of their being out of plumb.

Despite everything Orondo had a comfortable sense of being at home again. He busied himself unpacking his surveying instruments, and looked over a pile of hieratic picture-writings, containing reports on the mounds, earthworks, and temples he had been inspecting.

Two hours later, while Orondo was still absorbed in the work a tamane came and asked if he would receive the Dorado.

"Rather entreat thy master to summon me," replied Orondo. "Care sits heavily upon him, and it were better to encourage health and strength."

Still intent upon additions to, and corrections of, the documents in hand, Orondo did not look up when he heard the door open and close.

"Thou art always unselfish," declared Yermah, coming close to him; "but thou art prohibited from

inciting me to shirk duty. Not a word hast thou spoken of thine own case. Acquaint me with all which hath befallen thee."

There was a touch of his old self in tone and gesture, but he seated himself like an old man.

"Wilt thou insist on a detailed account of my journey hence and sojourn in the great valley?"

"Leave dry circumstance to the custodian of archives. But tell me if success full and complete crowned thy efforts."

"The mounds and the earthworks are perfect in location and design, and where finished are of enduring workmanship. Only a few temples have been erected; but when the flood subsides, work will go on again — slowly now, because of depleted numbers."

"Has the dread scourge touched that fair land, too?"

"Yes; and with much violence. For days a great double-headed dragon hung directly over the sun, as if it would fall down over and obscure the light. Its long body flickered with every current of air and the mountain divide, running north and south from ocean to ocean, heaved and shook responsive to it. This went on for many days; then the dragon was seen to back away into space; but it went very slowly, as if the sun held it transfixed. Clouds and darkness followed, and the waters lay over the tops of the trees, by the last accounts."

"Thou wert not eye-witness?"

"Not in all the district. My labor was in the south. The waters did not oppress me."

"Thou art newly come from our brethren in Zuni? Is it well with them?"

"The hotah has blown steadily one whole lunation, parching the surface dry as a desert. Years of patient artifice made water plentiful, but the sources have hidden in the earth, and every green thing is withered and dead. Windows fall out of the houses, doors refuse to hang, and are much too small for the openings. Man and beast suffer frightfully. An ashy hue overspreads the countenance. The eyes, lips and throats become parched and painful; then the only hope was to smear themselves with grease."

"And wert thou obliged to treat thy body so?" asked Yermah, mindful of Orondo's habit of exquisite cleanliness.

"Yes; and to a liberal coating of olive oil do I owe my life doubly. The evil omen overhead warned me of impending danger to us all, and my fealty to thee made me hasten homeward."

In answer to Yermah's grateful look, he continued:

"Coming through the narrow pass in the mountains lying south, I went always ahead of the tamanes to spy out the best places. One morning I found myself in close proximity to a grizzly, ravenously hungry. I had neither time to retreat nor to defend myself before the bear was upon me. I fell flat on my face, and lay motionless while he smelt me all over. The oil both puzzled and disturbed him, for he made off into the woods and left me to win back courage as best I could."

"This animal eats no flesh he hath not killed," said Yermah, "but thou art fortunate to escape a blow from its powerful paw, or a crushing squeeze."

"He was very hungry; and I was glad to be

flected that it was quite like the man to think of self in the midst of such appalling disaster.

It was evident, from Setos's punctilious, ceremonious manner, that he was the bearer of important news. His face and voice bespoke gratified vanity as he said:

"Hast thou had audience with the emissaries from Poseidon's kingdom?"

"No," answered Yermah, trying to read the masked countenance before him. "Art thou advised of the import?"

"Yes. It is most terrible. Through the agencies of earthquake and tidal wave, the whole island of Atlantis, with every living thing, is on the bed of the ocean."

A sharp, agonized cry from Yermah, who swooned and fell face downward at the feet of Setos, prevented further remark.

"His proud warrior spirit quails under him," said that individual peering at him curiously, but offering no assistance. "His courage kisses the ground before disappointed ambition. For the first time he knows fear." Setos's words were between a sneer and a hiss.

"Thou art destitute of humanity," exclaimed Orondo, springing forward and supporting the fallen head on his knee. "Thy brutal abruptness is wanting in loyalty," he continued, as long, white streaks mingled with the ruddy bronze about his sternly set mouth and chin.

"When thou art in Tlamco longer thou wilt find that discontent is rampant — that Yermah no longer has a united following," returned Setos, surprised at the outburst into saying more than he had intended.

"If so, thou art at fault. Speak not thus to me, Setos! I know that thou wert called a black magician in Poseidon's kingdom, and that none of the White Brotherhood except Akaza would suffer thy presence among the chosen."

Orondo's face was ablaze with indignation, while Setos and Alcamayn exchanged significant glances.

"Thou art unduly exercised, Orondo," mildly interposed the jeweler. "Setos meant no offense. Stress of the times and Yermah's long affliction have caused people to babble idly. When once he is among them, and when the earth is stable again, it will all pass like mere vaporings."

"I had sought thee for private conference on this very subject," said Setos, apologetically.

"And thou hast my answer," repeated Orondo, his eyes still sparkling angrily.

Alcamayn assisted in the restoration, and Setos was constrained to pull up a reclining chair, as the prostrate figure was being assisted to rise.

"Thou wilt not repeat?" whispered Setos, guiltily.

"Not until thou hast forgotten to be loyal," assented Orondo, looking him squarely in the face.

"Am I going mad, or am I dying?" wailed Yermah, pushing his fingers up through his tangled hair. "Did I hear aright? Tell me, Setos — didst thou say that our native land and all our people are blotted out?"

"Such is the word from Mayax. They also report that the land of the Mexi is split from east to west with a great rent in the earth, from which seven great volcanoes have sent fire and smoke ever since the crevice closed. In that section the disturb-

ance came from the east, and went far out into the surviving islands of the lost Lemuria on the west."

Alcamayn and Orondo shared Yermah's consternation; but, like Setos, they never expected to return to Atlantis, and therefore their interest was not so personal and keen.

Yermah still seemed stupefied, but he roused himself by a mighty effort of will.

"Call all the people together in the Temple of Saturn, on the proper day, and let the four intervening suns rise on a fasting and contrite nation. Let every house and roadway be swept for purification. Let the anointing and ablution be thorough, and let them come to the temple laden with flowers; because where flowers grow, love has been. This is the end of a divine cycle; and it is befitting that we come together in chastened spirit to mourn its myriad dead."

Seeing that they stood uncertain as to how to proceed, he added:

"I will make proclamation. See to it, Setos, and thou, Alcamayn, that the edict is posted on all the temple doors and all the obelisks, and make it known to the fleet and to the warriors. None shall be exempt from this Festival of Humiliation, and it shall be an anniversary for ages to come."

"Before thou art engrossed with quill and parchment, accept another service of wine of maguey," said Orondo, while the tamane was arranging writing materials. "Thy physical strength is indeed at low ebb."

"But my agonized spirit hears the shrieks of despair of our dying brothers. May they find comfort in the bosom of the Ineffable One!"

"Amenti! hear and grant, we beseech thee!" they all said in heartfelt sympathy.

"Wilt thou give us leave to smoke?" asked Setos, as Yermah prepared to write.

"With both assent and blessing. Thou art kind to remember what my poor confused brain is unable to recall at this moment."

He wrote:

Brethren of Tlamco — Greeting:

He whose face is always inscrutable and hidden begins another eon of time. Countless thousands of our fellows heard the dread voice and are silent.

Alcyone, the great central sun, has once more suffered eclipse, and a fiery sign hangs in the heavens.

The north is ingulfed, the south is on fire, the sacred east frowns and threatens in gray obscurity, and blood drowns the fading light in the west.

Desolation mocks the eye on all sides.

Thou art each and all commanded to prepare for a solemn commemoration of humiliation and despair. Go ye all to the Temple of Saturn, and there do honor to our beloved dead.

Bear thy burdens helpfully and with courage; for in the innumerable wanderings, upheavals, and cataclysms of our earth's stupendous career each creature has some time been summoned under penalty of death to make good use of its wits.

How many courtiers go into the presence of a king a hundred times, not to have speech with him, not to hear him, but merely to be seen, that he may know they are willing to serve.

When thou art in the house of death, speak if thou canst. If not, show thyself, and let thy heart be content.

Done by the hand of thy humble servitor,

YERMAH.

In dismissing Alcamayn and Setos, he said:

" Send the couriers from the lands of the Mayax and of Mexi to me in the early morning. I will have all their sayings engrossed on parchment and read in the temple.

" Let our brethren know this."

After a deep sleep of exhaustion, Yermah arose at early dawn and went into the private sanctuary. Before he crossed its portals his attention was attracted by a ray of light near his feet. Looking closely, he saw it was a pentagram graven on mica. It had two points on the side toward him, and placed so — it was a charm to repel evil.

Picking it up, he noticed that the reverse side had a circle for the sun, a crescent for the moon, a winged caduceus for Mercury, a sword for Mars, a hieroglyph for Venus, and a scythe for Saturn. The glyph was in the center, and interlaced with it was the word " Azoth."

A scrap of paper catching the Dorado's eye, he stooped and picked up Akaza's will. After giving minute directions about finding the manuscript and sacred relics hidden in the cave at Ingharep, it said:

I who am old and weary of the world sink into its dust. But I swear by him who sleeps at Aision that never did I not exist, nor will any one of us hereafter cease to be — though in this body thou wilt never see me again.

Farewell, my beloved! When thou hast mastered the pentagram, that sublime figure whose geometrical form connects the five senses of man with the throne of creative power, thou wilt fully realize that that which we hold as evil is in reality the greatest good.

Farewell, beloved! Treasure the five-pointed star, and meditate continually upon its teachings. Fear not. The

promise to return to thy native land shall be made good to thee when the times and seasons are propitious. When the inner spirit prompts thee, go. Thou wilt find a pentagram of similar make in the right spot. Let the seal of silence be on thy lips. May thy courage wax and grow strong as a lion. Though absent from the body, yet I am with thee always. Thou art my successor in all things. Wear the mantle of authority as if the All-seeing Eye were bent upon thee continually.

Farewell, my best beloved! May that formless entity whose presence is everywhere felt, yet never comprehended, guide and bless thee always.

AKAZA THE HERMAPHRODITE.[1]

Trying to fully realize that Akaza had crossed the boundary line between the two worlds, Yermah passed into the sanctuary.

But before he knelt he saw a tiny white square lying on the altar. He had only to glance at it to recognize the broken threads and entangled mesh of Kerœcia's weave. Some thoughtful hand had placed it there. He carried it to his lips reverently and examined it curiously. It was water-stained and wrinkled from compression in a pocket, but he divined that she had sent it to him by Ben Hu Barabe. Some time, when he could bear to speak of it, he would make inquiry — but not now! "O God! — not now!"

He sank down before the statue.

[1] Initiates were always considered hermaphrodites, but not in a sex sense. The name itself implies this, being a compound of Hermes (wisdom) and Aphrodite (love). When sex takes precedence over humanity it is hard to explain a divine mystery, because organs are mistaken attributes, and the whole world is sex mad. Nevertheless, activity and repose, positive and negative, equilibrium and discord, cause and effect, involution and evolution, differentiation and polarization of atoms, and the laws governing them are united in the one word — SEX.

"All, all is lost!" he cried in agony of soul — "Kerœcia, Akaza, and my fatherland! It is more than I can endure! Grant release to this tortured spirit — Thou whose whole essence is love and wisdom!"

Hoarse moans and sobs choked his utterance, while everything in the room seemed to vibrate with overwhelming sorrow.

He was crying man's tears — those that leave the eyelids dry, but drip inwardly and fall scalding hot on the heart. His poor routed will power interposed no opposition, while grief hurricaned through his non-resisting body. He was fighting the battle alone — facing the utter negation of self — the complete overthrow of desire.

Finally, overcome by physical exhaustion, he lay with his head at the feet of Orion, too weary to make an effort of any kind. After a while a sort of stupor came over him, and then he heard voices, while a cool breath of air fanned his heated cheek, and he felt the presence of his loved ones.

"Behold in tribulation the key which unlocks the mystery of the soul! The initiate cannot speak to the heart of man until he has himself drained to the dregs the bitter cup of life's miseries."

Yermah lifted a startled face, and peered intently about him in the vain hope of locating the speaker.

"Fear not, my beloved! Man is only what he thinks. He mingles his aura with that of his fellows, and the Redeemer becomes the fellow-sufferer, because the twain are made one in sorrow. Rise and go forth comforted. Thou hast loosed the belt of Orion. Thou hast crossed the bridge of Kinevat."

Without a moment's hesitation, and with implicit

faith, Yermah obeyed. He had touched and rebounded from the lowest rung of personal grief and despair, and he would never again sink so deeply in the Slough of Despond.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

A COMMEMORATION OF HUMILIATION AND DESPAIR

THE Temple of Saturn, where the Festival of Humiliation was held, was situated on Park Hill, southeast of the center of the city, near Mount Olympus. It represented one of the rings of Saturn, while a hill now occupied by an iron water-tank gave the outer ring.

The temple itself marked the orbit of Saturn, the reaper who gathers the harvest of the dead. It was a square edifice, and had towers which were of the same form at the base, but became round as the tall spires rose skyward. A high arched entrance of elaborately carved sandstone led to a long quadrangular hall. The ceiling was of heavy paneled redwood, polished and treated with copal, while the walls were an elaborate mural broken, double and single key patterns, interspersed with squares, circles and triangles in porphyry bas-relief. The floor was a succession of interlaced hoops and balls of blue enamel on squares of white marble.

Unlike the other temples, there was but one entrance, which faced west, signifying that all who entered the Hall of Death came by the same road; and, also, that the sun going down in the west was typical of physical life departing from the body.

An intricately carved ebony arch, relieved by

pieces of crystal and tiny panels of isinglass, enclosed the eastern altar, containing a gold sunburst and throne of the same, on which was seated a green jasper statue of Maia — the Virgin Mother of all.

The elevated platform of black marble had incense vessels, urns, and vases of gold, set with black onyx and diamonds, in a delicate tracery of black enamel.

Emblematic brocades of pale blue silk hung between the square windows, whose innumerable small panes were of frosted glass set in a circular frame.

A circle inscribed within a square is the geometrical emblem of death, and the veiled light conveyed the same idea.

In the center of the southern wall, under a richly canopied entablature of arms of Atlantis, emblazoned on a heavily fringed and corded brocade of shaded blue, was a high granite slab, back of which was a square ark containing an aërolite stone.

The Immaculate Conception also pertains to the mystery of death, since it is a new birth, and the heaven-born stone signifies that the newly released spirit is immaculate. In other words, that its birth into the body and contact with material life have left no stain upon its intrinsic purity.

Before this shrine Yermah ordered a purple veil of Akaza to be placed. Skulls and crossbones in white were painted upon this, to show that he was master of the living as well as of the dead.

The queen of odors, jasmine, which corresponds to G in alt, or equilibrium, filled the perfumed lamp suspended in the center of the shrine; while ewers of oil, containing citron, lemon, orange-peel, verbena, and rose sat on either side.

The Azes recognized the octaves of odor, and offered the higher grade to age; while the lower, consisting of almond, heliotrope, vanilla, clematis and neroli, were placed in ewers on the altar opposite, as a sacrifice to youth.

Musically, these correspond to the lower bass and upper treble clefs.

On a square base of onyx rose a pyramid and obelisk of prismatic glass at each side of the northern niche. The pyramid was composed of glass squares, ingeniously piled up, and the obelisk was of round balls of glass, beginning with twelve, and ending with one. Several lighted lamps placed behind them gave a bewildering effect of color through the crystal.

The niche itself ended in a sharp triangle, and contained a blue enamel swastika, familiarly known to-day as the Keys of Saint Peter.

Astronomically, it is the sign Aquarius, which is Janus, or Saint Peter, while Pisces is the swastika in his hand. It is correlated to the spiral movements in nature everywhere, and its hieroglyph is a dragon, serpent meander, or two rivers of fire.

Three marble steps led to this altar, and there was a constant stream of people praying before it. They entered barefooted, and silently threw themselves on the floor before the altars. The swastika not only indicated the time, but also the unsettled condition, and they implored continually:

"O Thou who art master of all motion, hold Thou the earth fast in the hollow of Thy hand! Grant that it may no longer be swayed in its orbit, but may go in peace, freed from evil influence. Hear and answer, we beseech Thee!"

Rising at daybreak, the whole populace made their ablutions with scrupulous care, and dressed themselves in spotless white.

They waited in vain for a glimpse of the rising sun, and then betook themselves to the housetops.

Turning with infinite yearning to the north, they cried out:

"Spirits of the lost ones, come quickly, since thou art expected!"

This curious practice was kept up at this yearly festival until the time of the conquest of Mexico. All the native races of America believed with the Norsemen that hell was situated in the north doubtless in memory of the overwhelming destruction of the great Ice Age.

Esoterically, ice is spiritual fire.

Reëntering their houses, the populace took their canapas [1] which were the same as the Roman titular deities, and hastened to a great funeral pyre already smoking in front of the Temple of Saturn.

Since fire was the substance of the sun, and since the sun's ray was the medium through which Deity contacted the earth, the devotees did not venture near it without prostrating themselves, kissing the earth, and making manifestations of abasement.

The worshipers made low obeisance to the four cardinal points, and threw cassia, cinnamon, sweet calamus and myrrh into the flames. Braving the heat, they held the canapas in the smoke until the figures warmed perceptibly, then wrapped them in linen scorched by the fire, and ran back to their houses.

It was no longer possible to summon them to the temples by ringing the big bell on top of the Observa-

[1] Lares and penates — household gods.

thoroughly saturated with oil, even if I did imagine it was rancid," observed Orondo, naïvely.

For the first time in many days, Yermah laughed.

"Nevertheless, thou art justly called the fearless one," he said.

"The same heat and distress lies everywhere in the south, and there is a faint, luminous mist, dry as the hotah itself, which makes the sun look like blood. It desposits whitish particles upon everything, very like a cottony wood fiber. Near the sea it disappears although the dry wind prevails. All of the testimony confirms the report that a brilliant rainbow surrounded the moon at the time the mist came."

Both men lapsed into silence, and profound depression came back to Yermah.

"The gardens have suffered comparatively little," said Orondo. "Not finding thee here, I went to see them immediately after ablution and prayers."

"Tlamco has been spared much which hath befallen other sections," responded Yermah. "The Monbas — Thou hast heard?"

"I have heard," said Orondo in a low voice. "My heart is still tender toward the high-priestess, Kerœcia. So long as I live, memory will hold her first among women."

Before Yermah could reply, he hastened to ask:

"Hast thou news from Poseidon's kingdom?"

"My summons hence is hourly expected. I am already of the Brotherhood. Seest thou the sign manual given by Akaza?"

He held up his hand while Orondo inspected the ring.

"Runners were dispatched down the coast to

communicate with the balsas coming in from Atlantis, but no answer was possible before my departure."

"Alcamayn desires speech with the Servitor Yermah," announced a tamane, answering a command to enter.

"Direct him here," said Yermah. "Thou hast not seen him since coming?" he asked Orondo.

When the two men had exchanged greetings, Alcamayn refused to disturb the conference.

"My only office was to bring tidings from the far north. Cezardis of the Mazamas is here, more dead than alive from hardships unparalleled, and begs thou wilt give him leave to remain in Tlamco."

"Willingly. But how fares his countrymen?"

"They are sore oppressed by the elements, especially by ice and snow, and there is only a handful of them left. The land of Ian is forever separated from this continent. An arm of the sea lies between them."

"Setos, come in! Thou art most welcome," said Orondo, catching a glimpse of him through the open doorway.

"Knowledge of thy presence hath but newly found me, and I came direct in quest of thee," said Setos, embracing Orondo. "This dread calamity is lessened, since thou art preserved."

"If unalloyed happiness were possible, thy speech would give it me," responded Orondo.

Yermah was about to dismiss Alcamayn, when Setos saluted him pompously, as became the head of the military.

There was the shadow of a smile on Orondo's face as he noted the new air of dignity, and he re-

tory, as the tower still lay in ruins; so they waited for the trumpet-call.

Incense was burned on the sacrificial altars, and a pot-pourri of resinous gums was carried in the hand, in alabaster or jeweled boxes, along with palm branches, which indicated a new period of manifestation of matter.

A procession issued from the western gate of the Temple of the Sun, in the center of Tlamco. First came a troop of warrior-priests with spears held upright and garlanded with roses.

The next was Yermah, robed in cloth of gold, with a white linen mantle over his shoulder. His head was bared, and he had submitted to tonsure as a sacred observance.

The Azes considered the human head a magnet, having a natural electrical, irregular circle, moving in the path of the sun.

The os-frontis, sinciput, and os-sublime are the positive pole, while the occiput is the negative.

In the right hand of the Dorado was a lotus-headed scepter, an emblem of religious dominion; while in his left hand was a sword constructed in the form of a cross, with three pommels, or two crescents for guards. It had been newly consecrated by being thrust into a fire made of laurel and cypress woods, after which it was wiped and polished with the ashes and wrapped in a linen cloth.

Behind the Dorado were one hundred youths, dressed to represent the four seasons; and after them came Imos, the high-priest, in green robes and tiara, borne on a litter by twelve priests, representing the sun in one of its zodiacal houses.

Following, walked the Virgin of the Sun, Oahspe,

who was to be offered up in sacrifice, as a solemn atonement for the people.

This observance did not involve the horrible rites of later superstition, because she did not represent death to the physical, but death of transgression and new birth into righteousness.

Back of her were one hundred vestals, dressed in white and crowned with myrtle. After them came boys and girls to the number of three hundred and sixty-five, each representing the sun and moon in their daily journey.

Last were five hundred warrior-priests clad in black, with white crosses on their backs and breasts.

The procession wound slowly around the serpentine avenue, and up the winding path to the temple, the priests chanting a hymn as they walked. Filing in, they stood ranged in rows on each side of the hall, and in the gray morning light their voices mingled with melodious strains of harps, flutes and lyres. The music rose grandly, floating through the dim aisles and out into the crowded spaces before the entrance. There were no lights on the altars, and the congregation moved like specters in the semi-darkness.

Imos knelt in the center before the veil which enclosed the figure of the ever-youthful Virgin. On his right side knelt Yermah, and on his left was Oahspe.

A hush fell over the people, the music ceased and all waited with bated breath to see if Divine help would be vouchsafed them.

Suddenly, through a rift in the clouds, shone a resplendent sun-ray, which flooded the figures and the statue with a golden light.

The tense, strained, fearful looks relaxed, and a long sigh of relief escaped their lips, while an electric thrill ran through the crowd, and many of them wept unrestrainedly.

The gates of the enclosure swung open, and Imos stood within, facing the sun. Then Yermah took Oahspe by the hand, and led her to Imos, who made a sign of hierarchal blessing and poured a few drops of olive oil over her hair. The high-priest stepped back, and, placing his right hand over his heart, held his left up to the figure of Maia, the Cosmic Virgin, and proclaimed in a loud voice:

"It is consummated!"

There was a moment's silence.

The sunshine faded from the golden hair of Oahspe, and a light, made by no mortal hands, flickered around the statue, illuminating the whole niche.

"In thy strength and wisdom, O Father-Mother, join Thou the heavens above with the earth below!" cried the people in response.

Again the music swelled through the temple and the warrior-priests made use of their long spears to light the lamps.

Yermah received the three-handled silver cup of humiliation from the high-priest Imos, and partook of its bitter contents. From him it passed to Oahspe, then to Orondo, Setos, Alcamayn, Ildiko, Rahula, Cezardis, Ben Hu Barabe, and Alcyesta and then on to every man and woman in the temple.

The priests composed and arranged the music used in the temples; and now a choir chanted a funeral text from their sacred books, referring to the sinking in earlier cataclysms of the continents of

Ruta and Daitya, which extended into the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea.

These continents included the Azores, the Cape Verde and Grand Canary Islands, while the peaks of Teneriffe are all that is left of Poseidon's kingdom. The latter, an island three hundred and fifty miles long and two hundred miles wide, contained the crystallization of ancient civilization, and had colonies in the four quarters of the globe.

The history of this race is written in the public works of the ancient kingdoms; in their bridges crossing great rivers and swamps; in the highways leveling mighty mountains and uplifting plains; in the matchless gardens and aqueducts; in the beauty and splendor of the cities; in fabulous treasures of gold and silver; and, more than all, in the grandeur of the mighty pyramids, temples and obelisks erected and dedicated to the glorification of a Supreme Being.

It was also written in the provident laws of the nation — in its progressive civic life, its happiness and its calm, delightful view of the world.

The priests chanted:

"The end of the Etherean column that extended to Kinevat, on the borders of the vortex of the earth, was made fast by the pressure of Thy wide heavens.

"And the vertex closed in from the extreme end, and, lo, the earth was broken!"

The people looked at each other and shuddered.

They understood the significance of Orion's Belt, and they knew, also, that the three hills overlooking the Golden Gate, where the waters had lately rushed through, typified one end of the Bridge of Kinevat.

Some among them knew that this referred to ini-

tiation, but it was generally supposed that the mystery had reference to death.

One variant of this allegory was personated in the heavens by the constellation of Orion. The three bright stars in his belt represented Will, Aspiration and Harmony.

For this reason the Dorado was required to pray before a figure of Orion which was the official lares and penates of Iaqua. In the abstract, the statue symbolized the god-hood in man.

As an image of his own higher self, it was a something on which Yermah could concentrate all of his thought-forces.

* * * * * * *

A low, plaintive wail from the instruments, and a chill seized the audience.

"A mighty continent was cut loose from its fastenings," sang the bass voices. "The fires of the earth came forth in flames and clouds and loud roarings."

"And the land rocked to and fro like a ship at sea," chimed the tenors.

"Again the vortex of the earth closed in on all sides," they all sang together.

"By great pressure the land sank beneath the waters to rise no more," they repeated three times. Then, after an impressive pause:

"The corporeans all went down to death!"

The wails and cries of the mourners drowned the music.

In the midst of the exercise, Yermah was invested with a purple robe and the pointed hat of a hierophant, while Imos took position in the northern niche, in front of the swastika. When quiet was

restored the high-priest knelt with the entire congregation, and after a long and fervent supplication rose and hung a broken heart of rubies on a little gold hook in the center of the revolving cross.

"Sacred to thy memory, O Atlantis!
Fit semblance of our grief for thee, O Poseidon!
Reminder of our transition hence to Kinevat —
The bridge between us and eternity!"

chanted the entire assemblage, making genuflections continuously.

Yermah found his way to the platform, and as Imos gave the hierarchal blessing he handed the Dorado a parchment scroll, which the latter slowly unrolled and read:

BUNDLE OF WONDERFUL THINGS [1]

The Great King of the Dazzling Face, the chief of all the Yellow Faces, was sad, seeing the sins of the Black Faces. He sent his air-vehicles to all his brother chiefs with highest men within, saying:

"Prepare! Arise, ye men of the Good Law, and cross the land while dry! The Lords of the Storm are approaching.

"Their chariots are nearing the land.

"She is doomed, and they have to descend with her.

"The nether Lords of the Fires (gnomes and fire elementals) are preparing their magic-worked weapons.

"But the Lords of the Dark Eye are stronger than these elementals, and they are the slaves of the mighty ones.

"They are versed in Astra. Come and use yours.

"Let every Lord of the Dazzling Face cause the vehicles of every Lord of the Dark Face to come into his hands, lest any should by this means escape from the waters;

[1] H. P. Blavatsky in The Secret Doctrine.

avoid the rod of the four elements, and save the wicked people.

"May every Yellow Face send sleep from himself to every Black Face.

"May even they be free from pain. May every man who is true to the Solar Gods bind every man under the Lunar Gods, lest he should suffer or escape his destiny.

"And may every Yellow Face offer his life-water to the speaking animal watching beside the Black Face.

"Let him not awaken his master — The hour has struck — the black night is ready — Let their destiny be accomplished. We are the servants of the Great Four — May the King of Light return."

"The Great King fell upon his dazzling face and wept.

. . . "When the kings assembled, the waters had already moved. . . . The natives had now crossed the dry lands. They were beyond the water-mark. Their kings reached them in their vehicles, and led them on to the lands of fire and metal (east and north) . . .

"Stars and meteors showered on the lands of the Black Faces, but they slept. . . .

"The waters rose and covered the valleys from one end of the earth to the other. High lands remained dry. . . . There dwelt those who escaped — the men of the Yellow Faces and of the Straight Eye.

"When the Lords of the Dark Faces awoke, they bethought them of the vehicles, in order to escape from the rising waters, but they were gone. Some of the most powerful of the Dark Faces awoke first, and pursued those who had spoiled them. Many of the faint-hearted perished on their way.

"The pursuers, whose heads and chests soared high above the water, chased them. Finally the rising waves reached

them, and they perished to the last man. The soil sank under their feet, and the earth engulfed those who had desecrated her. . . ."

* * * * * * *

When Yermah ceased speaking, he crossed over to the southern altar, and laid a small wreath of jasmine on Akaza's veil, saying:

"Thou hast quashed the will-o'-the-wisp of doubtful spirits. Thou hast crossed the Bridge of Kinevat [1] and art come into bliss."

The congregation followed the example of the Dorado, and for the remainder of the day made offerings upon the different altars. They deposited palms in the eastern niche; on the north, cypress and aloes; on the south, quantities of white flowers; while about the entrance they strewed branches of weeping-willow.

The sun went down on absolute silence.

Every animal was either muzzled or shut up in a dark place.

There was not a light in the city, nor did a human being speak above a whisper.

Just before midnight the people retired, without breaking fast during the whole twenty-four hours.

[1] It is a mistake to suppose that the personality originates thought. The sphere called mind reflects thought, as the earth reflects the light of the sun. It is quite as mis-leading to assert that the spirit leaves the body at death as it would be to assume that the sun is actually in the earth, because this planet lives by its rays. The spirit never is in the body — therefore it has neither birth nor death. It contacts and vivifies the body in the same manner as does the sun the earth. The photosphere of the earth, and the aura of man are universal exemplifications of the mysterious Bridge of Kinevat.

In the dead watches of the night they communed silently with hordes of disembodied entities who had crossed the bridge which connects one phase of mind with desire, and the other with spirit. By this means the upward surging forces of the animal kingdom, are united with the downward cycling emanation of the Divine — the most profound myth associated with the Bridge of Kinevat.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

THE ARROW-HEAD MEMORIAL TO THE LOST MONBAS TRIBES

THE legend of Humoo, or the Lost Arrow, associated with the Giant's Thumb, one of the wonders of the Yo-Semite Valley, had its origin in the building of the enormous arrow-head in a triangular plateau two thousand feet above the level of the sea, in the ribbon-like convolutions of the San Bernardino Mountains, about six miles from the little village bearing the same name.

The Mexican hero, Santa Anna, is immortalized in the name of the valley stretching southward to the peaks of Temescal, where tin and other ore of value was being formed in nature's laboratory, as Yermah and his men fashioned the arrow-head [1] which would serve as a memorial stone, an arrow-head burial for the lost Monbas tribes.

A circle intersecting Twin Peaks, in Tlamco, and including the North Dome, in the Yo-Semite, and the arrow-head, is exactly one fifth the diameter of the moon. The dual reference to the mind and to people, always ascribed to the influence of the moon, here found adequate expression in this giant monument. It commemorated the loss of a continent, the extinction of a race, and also pictured the mental anguish of the surviving nations.

[1] Sixteen hundred (Egyptian) feet long by five hundred feet wide.

The arrow, typical of thought, was composed of disintegrated white quartz on light gray granite, and it stands out bold and white against a dark background of entirely different soil. Short white grass and weeds cover the arrow-head proper, while dark shrubbery and trees mark the surrounding country. So perfect is its contour, so elevated its situation, it can be descried from every part of the valley, and is plainly visible at a distance of thirty miles.

So cunningly was the soil mixed for the molding of the arrow, that the ages since have not caused it to diminish, nor can it be made to support vegetation of a larger growth, or of species common to its surroundings.

The flint points downward, and at its base is a cluster of twenty medicinal springs, famous for their curative powers.

Westward Santa Catalina Island had but recently appeared, and although eighty miles away, it still smoked and rocked, animated by the hidden forces which called it into being.

The blue coast line rises out of the purple mists in the distance like spectral silhouettes. And there are deep cañons in the rugged mountains in the immediate vicinity, carrying ice-cold streams in close proximity to the steam and sulphurous vapors issuing from the boiling springs dotting the narrow pass below.

Yermah did wisely to bring his men south — for the northern mountains were still shaking and spitting black vomit over the valleys at their base.

The heat was too fierce for rain, although the

moisture-laden breezes were sucked in from the ocean in perfect hurricanes.

Lying well south, inland, and sheltered by a mountain range, the San Bernardino Valley afforded shelter for distressed man and beast. It was here, and while waiting for seed-time, that the arrow-head was outlined so strangely on the mountain side.

Much that is curious in Indian lore clings to this spot. Like a pillar of fire, the arrow is said to have guided their forefathers to this place, where it finally rested. Evil has been put to flight here more than once.

The Azes' judges drew the death-circle and square over the breast of the condemned with an arrow, and this is why the arrow-head burial was given Kerœcia and her followers.

The Festival of Humiliation began a period of mourning which was continuous and fervid until this curious monument was completed and dedicated.

While Yermah was away from Tlamco, Orondo served in his stead much to the annoyance of Setos, who was as busy as a mole in the dark, stirring up sedition, and adding to the general unrest and suspicion everywhere manifest.

The high-priest, Imos, at the suggestion of Setos, openly charged that the Brotherhood of the White Star were to blame for the destruction of Atlantis. Some solemn vow had been broken, and Deity was mortally offended.

This assertion gave pestiferous, meddlesome Setos the desired opportunity, and he instituted a severe and rigorous investigation into the conduct of all

public affairs; also, into the lives of every man and woman in Tlamco.

No one escaped; nor was any situation sacred to the inquisitors, who in the name of morality did not hesitate to go to any length.

Setos did not dare to openly accuse Yermah of breaking a vow made to the Ineffable One.

He refrained from fixing this unpardonable sin on any other person, and by innuendo and insinuation contrived to strengthen every breath of discontent inherent in the unusual conditions arising from a mixture of races, habits and modes of thought.

He urged Yermah to give all refugees asylum in Tlamco, knowing that enforced idleness and nameless dread opened the mind for seditious propaganda. Both he and Imos insisted strenuously that some one had sinned against Divinity.

This accusation made each one distrustful and suspicious, and in their anxiety to clear themselves many an overt act or word was let loose to strengthen the intangible something which hovered in the air. None pretended to name it; nor was there anything but the most circumspect language used.[1]

Setos knew better than to show his hand. He was content, at present, to merely discredit the Dorado. As to his future plans — time would prove them.

Yermah felt, rather than saw, the change, but he

[1] Profane and blasphemous words were unknown to the native races in the Americas. These people believed that speech was given man to enable him to praise his Maker.

To this day the Indian is chary of words — and in all the relations of life his language is circumspect, and dignified. He only speaks when it is necessary, and rightly has profound contempt for the human who talks too much.

was above indulging a personal grief. He had already consecrated his life to his fellows, so that work was the one thing which absorbed and interested him.

He saw that planting must be confined to the southern part of the country, since steady downpours marked the spring and early summer months.

He also knew it would require his best endeavors to procure food for the ensuing year.

Reports from the Valley of the Mississippi stated that heavy floods had prevailed for months, caused by preponderance of hot air blown over the Rocky Mountains and condensed into rainfall early in the season. The winter months set in with unparalleled rigor, and the spring found that whole country under one solid sheet of ice.

Many of the inhabitants had fled to the south. The exodus to Mexico was in full tide. This migration caused the mysterious race, the Toltecs or the Mayas, to leave their mounds and earthworks, their canals and busy centers, their cities and civilization, to puzzle the antiquarian in later ages.

The earth still moaned and sighed under the impulse of subterranean fire, while the surface froze stiff in the accumulation of waters and low temperature. Man, ever the creature of circumstance, was still panic-stricken, oppressed by dismal forebodings, all his settled faiths rudely shaken, and he an easy prey to cunning and unscrupulous design.

Setos flattered himself that he managed the situation very cleverly when he said to every one whom he met:

"It is rumored that our Grand Servitor intends to marry. Traditional law and custom forbid his

the dead, and for their commands and wishes, was an article of faith with the Azes, and one which Atlantian rulers had always respected.

"He will be hierophant only," muttered Setos. "Good! His order forbids resort to force, and in case of necessity he can be expelled. It is well to resign what thou art in imminent danger of losing."

There was an angry scowl on Setos's red face, and his lips curled scornfully.

Yermah stood with bowed head, and when he attempted to speak his voice was shaken with emotion.

"A sense of gratitude unmans me! I have no wish but to serve ye well. In resigning civic honors I desire to name Orondo as my successor."

The Dorado turned to Orondo, and giving him his hand, drew him forward, as his astonished auditors recovered their presence of mind and began to cheer. Both men, deadly pale, faced about side by side and bowed gravely.

"The fair and gentle Ildiko will find a good husband in Orondo, and the Azes a Servitor worthy of their fullest confidence. Will ye have it so?"

"Haille! Haille! Haille!" The well-known shout of triumph had something of the heartiness of the olden times.

"Does this arrangement please thee, Setos?" asked Yermah, kindly, taking the hand of Setos in both his own, and reading his countenance closely.

"Since thou wilt no longer serve — Orondo is my second choice," stammered Setos, politely, if not sincerely.

"And wilt thou have me for thy son?" asked Orondo, simply, but without a shade of animation.

The substitution of men was not so rapid as to

prevent Setos from realizing the advantage to himself; so he answered readily and with heartiness:

"No man could desire a better or a more worthy son. Come with me to Ildiko."

There were several degrees of dignity added to Setos as he linked his arm in Orondo's and passed out of the building.

The crowd manifested some curiosity, which Setos noted out of the corner of his eye as they went by. If he had failed to win all he had played for, he had at least accomplished something.

Gratified ambition sent a glow of satisfaction through Setos which made him feel quite amiable toward Yermah, despite his fixed determination to either rule or ruin the Dorado — beloved of the people.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

FOR REASONS OF STATE — ORONDO ESPOUSES ILDIKO

THREE months intervened between the betrothal announcement, immediately after Ildiko's consent was obtained, and the beginning of the wedding festival, which lasted thirty days. This brought the actual consummation down to the time in October when the sun and moon were in conjunction.

Those were happy days for Ildiko, who was in a flutter of excitement from morning until night over the preparation of her trousseau. Everything necessary for her comfort was furnished in sets of twelve.

There were exquisitely ornamented terra-cotta jars provided for each of her dresses, which were placed in a row around the walls of her room, much more suggestive of tea than of a wardrobe.

For the ceremony in the Temple of Venus there was a creation of vivid yellow, wrought in heavy bands of silk embroidery and tawny gold. The veil to match was of the finest yellow gauze, worked with floss and glitter until it was like a cobweb with the sun shining through it. The material of the gown was that of rare, fine texture which writers are always drawing through a finger-ring.

In the voluminous skirt, at least twenty yards of gossamer silk had been used, but the effect was soft, clinging and graceful in the extreme. The waist

was like an Eton jacket, too short to reach the skirt, and had half-length sleeves. The substitute for material at the waist line was a broad girdle of jewels.

Orondo himself superintended the making of this article. It would be his privilege to unclasp it on the nuptial night and hang it outside the bridal chamber, as a pledge of his wife's honor. It was not a straight band, but broadened over the hips, and was sacred to Venus, the love planet.

The second of the bridal robes was of scarlet silk, almost covered with gold-thread embroidery, in which precious stones were skillfully imbedded. With it was provided a red gauze veil edged with gold fringe. Both gowns were fashioned alike, except that the red skirt was narrower, and finished in a long train edged with peacock feathers, which hung as a mantle from the shoulders.

As soon as the city was decorated, and during the entire thirty days' preliminary festivities, Ildiko wore simple white, destitute of ornament.

She did not appear in public, except in going to and from the Temple of Venus, where she greeted the rising sun every morning and offered special prayers on behalf of her new duties.

Orondo made similar supplication at the same hour in the Temple of Mars. Though not a demonstrative man, he was careful to observe all the niceties of his position.

When with Ildiko, his countenance bespoke contentment; and at some of her witty sallies his face would light up with a rare smile. She was all bustle and excitement, and made heavy demands upon her bridesman, Yermah.

Ildiko was neither resentful nor sensitive. When

the Dorado took her hand, and begged forgiveness because of his seeming disloyalty, her sympathies went out to him, and she impulsively told him that she honored his choice. She loved Kerœcia too, she said, and hoped that this mutual affection would prove a strong bond between them.

Setos was in his glory. He strutted about the city officiously, and assumed a dictatorial manner, in the Council Chambers, which was tolerated in a good-natured way. Setos was also allowed to indulge himself in several flights of fancy not strictly in accordance with facts.

With his thumbs in his arm-holes and his conical hat set well back on his head, he unbosomed himself to Rahula, whose adroit flattery now fell upon very willing ears.

He was paternal and patronizing to Alcamayn, who was galled almost beyond endurance by what he fancied were the pitying glances of his fellows.

Alcamayn angrily told himself that he was not in love with Ildiko; but he was keenly sensible of the fact that a bachelor was not only taxed — he was looked down upon.

The jeweler knew that there was no chance for promotion so long as he remained single; but his own vanity and Rahula's insidious teaching made him hold himself entirely aloof from alliance with any but a pure-blooded Atlantian.

His share in the preparations was wholly perfunctory, a situation not lost upon Orondo, whose delicacy deterred him from seeking advice on the nuptial ring and girdle.

Alcamayn himself was keenly alert on these very points. When he purposely wandered in where the

workmen were putting on the finishing touches, he was so exasperated that he could with difficulty restrain himself.

Day by day his irritation grew, fanned by injudicious remarks, insinuations and exaggerated reports of Orondo's devotion.

Divining something of this, Ildiko often inquired concerning him, and sent many messages by Rahula. Now that she was having her own way, she was very amiable to the other woman. Rahula's sad face, and what Ildiko imagined Alcamayn must suffer, added to her own high spirits. So it was that shallow-brained, selfish Ildiko enjoyed being the center of attraction, and accepted as justly her due the thousand and one courtesies the time and situation showered upon her.

Not even a vague suspicion of her lover's former attachment crossed her mind.

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Northeast from the center of Tlamco was the Temple of Venus, set apart for marriage and all domestic affairs. It was here that the vestal virgins lived, and taught the young children. It was an oval-shaped structure, with rows of pillars inside, supporting a convex domed roof of colored glass. The pillars were ornamented elaborately with stucco, rainbow-tinted, each one showing a solid color. The interstices between had mirrors with beaten copper frames placed over the glass itself. The tessellated floor was of black marble, the vessels of exquisitely hammered silver, while the altars were of onyx on copper bases. Passion-flowers, gillyflowers and hollyhocks, emblems of fecundity, were employed in the

decorations of the temple for the wedding. Ivy, meaning fidelity; grasses, showing submission; heliotrope, for devotion; syringa and roses, for love, were freely intertwined about the pillars and altars.

On Friday, the day of love and marriage, no blood was allowed to be shed for food.

At the wedding, the vestments of Imos and his assistants were of azure, their ornaments of polished copper, their head garlands of white and red roses, and they carried myrtle and olive branches.

Apple-green and pale rose were the colors of the canopy placed in the southern niche, under which the ceremony took place. It was an open, flaring triangle with a lamp in the apex, having the pedestal of iron, the joint of brass, the bowl of silver, and the center of gold. It had two arms, composed of three metals interlaced in such a manner as to leave a triple conduit for oil.

There were nine wicks; three in the middle, and three in each arm. The lower rim of the pedestal represented a serpent, while the globe was large and double, having compartments filled with colored waters and perfumed so that the air was cool and fragrant.

The lamp was on a revolving standard of polished wood, and at its base were three smoking incense-jars of burnished bronze.

Early on the morning of the wedding, a brilliant pageant formed in front of Setos's house and marched through the principal streets. It consisted of beasts of burden, and tamanes, loaded with presents for the bride, and also carrying her belongings to Iaqua.

First came the jewel bearers, armed to the teeth, escorted by cavalrymen, brandishing broadswords

and performing many feats of horsemanship and skill.

This was followed by a cavalcade of burros, laden with scented jars and baskets containing the trousseau, which had kept half of Tlamco industriously occupied for three months.

The presents came from military, naval and civil guilds; from the priesthood, from the vestals, and from the children and the aged.

Poets walked in front of them reciting odes, and the musicians performed special compositions in honor of the occasion.

As soon as the procession turned into the beautifully decorated avenue leading to Iaqua, the populace hastened to the Temple of Venus.

It was also the signal for Orondo, with Setos on one side and Hanabusa on the other, to issue from the eastern entrance of the official residence. His warrior dress of white kid was rich in golden bosses, bands and fringes. Over his shoulders hung the green feather mantle of his rank, held in place by shoulder medallions of brilliants.

On his head was a tall liberty cap of white kid, ornamented with gold filigree, and having three quetzal feathers in the apex. He doffed his head-covering at the temple door, exposing a simple gold band over his hair.

Setos and Hanabusa wore a silver and green combination, ornate with eagle's feathers and embroidery. They carried large bouquets of roses, and supported the sword and shield of the bridegroom.

Behind them, in single file, carrying a jeweled lantern in each hand, came Alcamayn, Ben Hu Barabe, Cezardis, and twenty-two young officers of the high-

est rank, in full regimentals, followed by the representative men of Tlamco, with the priesthood and councilors of state in the lead.

Their wives stood in line in front of Setos's house, waiting to perform the same service for Ildiko.

"Blessed be he that cometh!" shouted the people in the streets.

"Blessed indeed is he!" responded Orondo's escort.

"Haille! Haille! Haille!" they shouted together.

Then the same formula was repeated.

The first greeting and exchange brought Ildiko to the door. She glanced about her half-fearfully, and seemed in need of Yermah's supporting arm.

In addition to the yellow robe already described, she wore a mantle of yellow brocaded with silver and gold, which swept the ground far behind her.

For the last time in her life would she be permitted to wear her hair flowing, and its gold band, an exact duplicate of the one Orondo wore, was the only ornament, save a crown of white lilies, attesting her purity of heart. Strand after strand of pearls wound around her neck; bangles and bracelets dangled at her slender wrists; but her small white hands were uncovered, and her fingers were unadorned.

Yermah wore pale blue cloth embroidered with silver stars and bands, and a blue cap, with silver ornaments and white plumes. His mantle was of plain white silk. From his left arm swung a large reticule of silver cloth crusted with turquoise, containing the yellow gauze wedding-veil.

Supporting the train of the bride's mantle came Rahula, in a purple robe, elaborately worked with a

pattern of leaves in pale metallic green, outlined in delicately frosted silver. The jacket was lined with green, and the undervest was a mass of silver and jewels.

Beside her was Alcyesta, in a lavender robe. Iridescent bead embroideries set with amethysts, and copper ornaments in quaint symbolic design, such as the Monbas were wont to employ, made a pleasing contrast to the rows of vestals and priestesses in pure white.

Two fierce-looking fencers led the way, followed by hundreds of children, who scattered roses along the pathway, or accepted some of the nuts and small cakes given out by the bride's orders on all the thoroughfares.

A delegation of priests barred the entrance and stopped Orondo on the threshold. As soon as Ildiko joined him, he purchased an ear of corn of Setos, handing him an eagle-quill of gold. Turning to Ildiko he asked:

"Dost thou wish to be mother of my household?"

"Yes," she answered, and proceeded to buy a similar ear of corn from Yermah, paying the same price for it. Then she turned to Orondo and asked:

"Hast thou the wish to be father of my household?"

"Yes," he asseverated, solemnly. Taking the ear of corn he had purchased, he handed it to her, saying:

"Where love and harmony dwell, I am master."

Ildiko gave Orondo her purchase as she replied:

"Where thou art master, I am mistress."

They both began to twist roses and myrtle and olive branches into a garland wrapped with gold and

silver wires, as a symbol of their blending lives. Still weaving, they advanced slowly down the aisle, and paused before the canopy, while harps and voices blended in a bridal hymn.

Setos stood beside Orondo, while Yermah supported Ildiko.

When the music ceased the priests and vestals chanted in unison:

"We give thee myriads of years. Like the moon advancing to the full; like the sun ascending to the heavens; like the everlasting southern hills; like the luxuriance of the fir and cypress — never waning, never failing! — may such be thy succeeding lines."

"Om — ah! Om — ah! Om — ah!" murmured the four at the altar.

"Orondo, servant of the Most High," said Imos impressively, "art thou in any way related to this maiden by ties of blood, intimate or remote?"

"The silken cords of affection are all that bind me here."

"Dost thou swear this by the sacred fire on the altar before thee?"

"I do." Orondo spoke firmly.

When the high-priest had asked the same questions and received the same responses from Ildiko, he continued:

"Orondo, on thy honor as a man, is the solemn covenant thou art about to make voluntary on thy part?"

"It is."

Ildiko gave the same assurance.

Imos handed Orondo the marriage-band, which was so large he could slip it over his right hand and

then clasp Ildiko's easily. It was a broad circlet of silver set with turquoise, lapis lazuli, and beryl.

"In the name of the Trinity, I command thee, Orondo, and thee, Ildiko, to join right hands and seal thy promise of fidelity with a kiss."

As they obeyed, Yermah, Setos, and Imos covered them with the gauze veil, murmuring blessings in the name of the three divine attributes. Yermah knelt before the twain and said:

"Orondo, my beloved, I give unto thee this damsel adorned with jewels and protected by the Lord of Creatures."

"So be it."

Setos knelt beside Yermah and said in a tremulous voice:

"Orondo, beloved, I give to thee my only begotten, to be thine honor and thy wife; to keep thy keys and share with thee thy joys and sorrows."

"Let them be trampled upon and confounded who maliciously endeavor to create ill-will between us," answered Orondo, loud enough to be heard throughout the temple.

Rahula involuntarily gave Alcamayn an apprehensive glance.

That young man stared straight ahead of him with blood-shot eyes and a dull, half-foolish expression. He did not seem to hear Imos, when he said:

"By the power vested in me, I unite and bind thee, Orondo, and thee, Ildiko, one to the other. Live ye in peace."

Lifting their veil he anointed their foreheads and wrists with unguent. Then he carefully drew a gold thread from the bride's mantle and another from the

remaining in supreme control more than a year without giving promise of succession."

To which his auditor invariably gave tongue with speculation as upon whom his choice could fall.

"Property and descent are traced through the female side; therefore, he should espouse Ildiko," said the high-priest Imos. "It is better that pure Atlantian blood should be continued in power."

Flattering things were said to, and of, Ildiko, until her silly head was in a whirl, and she began to take on grand airs of importance. She snubbed Alcamayn unmercifully, not because she really disliked him, but — to be perverse, especially when her woman's wit discovered that Rahula cherished hopes of supplanting her in her father's affection.

Like many a child since, she had no intention of cheering her father's declining years; nor was she unselfish enough to allow any one else to do so.

She would marry, of course, and would place herself to the best possible advantage, thanks to her father's influence and position; but gratitude to him or to any one else was entirely foreign to her thoughts. She secretly hated Rahula, because the latter had been like a mother to her; and it gave her keen delight to thwart Rahula's scheme to marry her to Alcamayn. She was not only dazzled by the prospect of occupying Iaqua, but she knew that this would disappoint and hurt a woman who had unwittingly aroused an unwarranted but common phase of jealousy.

As is often the case, Yermah, the most interested man of them all, was the last to hear the gossip. At first he took no notice. But one day Imos asked him pointedly:

"Wilt thou comply with the demands of the people?"

"If thou wilt name thy wish, I shall answer thee truly," responded Yermah.

It was in the Temple of the Sun, near the noon hour, and the audience chamber was crowded, Yermah presiding.

"If thou art to be the head of this commonwealth, a helpmeet becomes thy station. Ildiko, daughter of Setos, thy councilor, is of pure blood and comely. Her heirs would be acceptable as future rulers."

Yermah seemed to shrivel and grow small as the words reached him. He unconsciously assumed an attitude of defense, mechanically passed his hand over his ashen face, and said in a low voice:

"Let this honor in service pass me by!"

Instantly there was tremendous excitement, and Setos's small pig-eyes emitted a dangerous gleam.

"So he refuses the only chance he has to reign in peace. So be it! I — Setos — will make it cost him his position."

In the hubbub and confusion, Yermah beckoned to Orondo, and the two stood in earnest converse for a few moments. Finally, the Dorado held up his hand for silence.

"By the will of our beloved Akaza, I am made his successor as hierophant in the exalted Brotherhood. The vow of my boyhood still binds me, and my heart lies buried in the lava-flow of the north. My fellows and brothers, will ye not release me from civic service? The dead have laid imperative commands upon me."

"It is our duty to obey the 'Voice of the Silence,'" quickly responded Imos, knowing that reverence for

groom's, and tied them together. He handed the knot to Ildiko, saying:

"Be this always a sign of indissoluble union."

Picking up a sprig of ivy, Setos bound it across Orondo's forehead, adding:

"Be this a similar token unto thee."

Receiving a cup of mead from the hands of an assistant, he blessed it, drank of it, and passed the libation to the newly married couple.

After Ildiko took a sip, she threw the cup on the floor, and as she did so every unmarried man in the temple followed her example by dashing into pieces a porcelain, glass or pottery vessel, as a signal of renunciation.

The bridal party filed out of the temple to the music of harps and flutes. There was an eager wish to witness the leave-taking of the bride and bridegroom, who formally separated at the door and returned to their respective homes until nightfall. Then the bride would enter Iaqua in state, and the matrimonial coronation would take place.

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"Impatience lends wings to my desire, Ildiko," whispered Orondo. "I long for thee incessantly. Come quickly."

"Only this poor body is absent from thy side, Orondo. Thy wish is but an echo of my thought."

"From meridian to sunset is a lifetime in the history of love," said Orondo, as he glanced at the unclouded sky overhead. "Oh, misery! that I must leave thee!"

"Thou art a flattering and indulgent husband," responded Ildiko, smiling up into his face affectionately.

He stood uncovered, and waited for her to pass on; then he turned ever and anon on his way back to Iaqua, waving his hand to her, until Ildiko reached her father's house.

The lanterns, banners and flags flapped lazily in the breeze or sunned themselves listlessly. There was a grand naval demonstration on the bay, an exchange of shots by the mangonels in the forts, and a review of warriors on parade.

The citizens young and old made various senseless noises in their exuberance of spirits, while the Chief Councilmen went into session immediately to await the announcement of the formal resignation of Yermah and the taking of the oath of office by Orondo.

It was not without a sinking heart that Yermah had given up his old habits of life. It cost him many pangs to abandon his quarters; and for days he had that houseless, homeless feeling inseparable from removal to new surroundings.

Orondo pleaded long and earnestly that he would still reside at Iaqua. The Dorado steadily refused. He would content himself with the unpretentious quarters of Akaza in the Temple of Neptune.

With his own hands, he took an inventory of all things pertaining to his office, the jewels, the horses, trappings and chariots.

He removed nothing except his personal effects, and, as a wedding present, he gave Orondo his last state mantle — the one he had worn on Kerœcia's birthday.

Orondo still had the garment on his shoulders, and would wear it in the Hall of Embassadors, when

he solemnly pledged his life and sacred honor to the service of the Azes.

Later in the day, there was feasting and rejoicing in all the community houses, the institutions and barracks, as well as in the homes.

Enthroned under a canopy of scarlet, Ildiko sat out the afternoon, surrounded by her family and friends. It was her formal leave-taking of girlhood days, and her eyes filled with tears as she slowly passed from one room to another.

She yielded to a fit of weeping when she reached the door of her own room, and saw that in her absence it had been denuded of all her possessions.

"Oh, my father!" she cried, "is it possible that thou wilt turn me out of thy heart as well as out of thy house?"

She threw herself across the foot of her bed, and sobbed convulsively.

Rahula brought her father, and by a sign motioned the others to leave them. Setos gave her a grateful look as she closed the door, but it was a long time before he could speak. He sat motionless and helpless until Ildiko could get command of her overwrought nerves, and then he soothed and quieted her as best he could.

Rahula returned presently with a sleeping potion, but the bride refused to drink it.

"Let me remember every hour of this day," she pleaded, and so had her way.

As the sun went down the bride arose, and performed anew her ablutions, and prayed with fervor and abandon. Then she arrayed herself in scarlet, and wound herself up in the voluminous red veil with as much skill and ingenuity as possible, so that

her husband might find it difficult to see her face, since it was his task to unwind it, as soon as she crossed the threshold of Iaqua.

With the appearance of the evening star, came the state chariot drawn by four spirited bays, ready to carry her to her new home. The whole city seemed to be alive with torches and lanterns, which rivaled the brilliant illumination overhead, as Ildiko, accompanied by Yermah and her father, stepped into the vehicle.

The populace ran alongside, singing bridal songs and shouting good wishes into her ears. Little cakes, nuts, and bouquets were thrown from the chariot as souvenirs, while the blare of trumpets added to the general noise and confusion.

All the notables of Tlamco were assembled at Iaqua to welcome the bride. A very timid, frightened little morsel of humanity she was, as Orondo carried her into the house.

She had intended to make a great show of resistance when he attempted to remove her veil; but she was so dazed that she lost all presence of mind, and actually helped him.

With grave sweet tenderness, Orondo freed her from entanglement, and led her in triumph to the dais prepared for them, where for the next two hours they received congratulations.

When divested of their mantles, the bride and groom led the dancing, and with it Ildiko's spirits rose. It was her privilege to challenge any swain in the company, and he was obliged to follow her through the maze of whirling dancers until he should succeed in capturing the illusive veil she occasionally tossed at him.

As soon as the formal change was danced with Orondo, she threw the veil over Alcamayn's shoulder. He was a splendid dancer, and she knew that he would give her ample opportunity to display her own skill.

Round and round they went — he in hot pursuit, she alert to provoke and yet escape him.

At last, panting with exertion, she suffered him to touch the gauze, and then the dancers rushed away to get something to drink and to recover their breath.

No precaution was taken to prevent over-indulgence in the use of the liquids, because it was considered a crime punishable with death if any one came to harm through excess of this kind.

The high-priest, Imos, first proposed and drank the health of the bride and groom. Then came Hanabusa, who did the same for the navy; Setos performed a similar office for the civil authorities; Ben Hu Barabe, for the lost and loved ones; Cezardis, for the stranger within the gates; after which friends of each saluted and offered a libation to their future.

Abstemious by nature, Orondo did little more than touch the various liquors with his lips, but Ildiko quenched thirst freely, and soon the heat and excitement began to tell on her.

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Nothing escaped the eagle eye of Alcamayn.

Ildiko had sought to appease him by a show of preference in selecting him to dance, but he resented it as a mean attempt on her part to parade his humiliation. Before coming into the ballroom, he had taken a copious drink of hemp and opium, and had

purposely selected the wine of maguey (mescal) for his toast.

Now this fiery liquid mounted to his infuriated brain, and he was positive that every one in the room was thinking how badly he had been treated, and secretly deriding him for not seeking revenge.—Revenge! That was it! But he had come prepared.

Red and white lines mingled with the pockmarks, and his misshapen body seemed to writhe like a snake under the goad of his malicious thoughts.

He was growing noisy and boisterous; so much so that his companions tried to prevent him from approaching the bride, but he angrily refused to heed them.

"Come on!" he loudly proclaimed. "She is a discarded love of mine, who still adores me. Come on, and I will prove her! She shall give *me* her wedding ring — the one Orondo made with his own hands!"

Ben Hu Barabe, Hanabusa, Yermah and Cezardis closed in around him, but he broke away from their restraint and boldly bantered Ildiko for an exchange of rings. He had the face of a fiend, as he said:

"Wilt thou not, for old times' sake, give me one of thy little rings in return for one of mine? Choose among these," he continued, holding up a hand loaded with beautiful gems, quaintly set.

She looked at him unsteadily, simpered foolishly and was about to make some maudlin reply, when Orondo, white with anger, whispered to her:

"Make the exchange quickly. Thou art under observation."

Startled by his tone, and only half-comprehending

the situation, Ildiko slipped off her wedding ring, a flat silver band covered with an intricate gold interlaced filigree. Without looking at it, she handed it to Alcamayn, receiving from him a diamond marquise for her little finger.

"What did I tell thee!" cried the hunchback triumphantly. "Thou knowest the pledge that goes with this? Poor Orondo! I envy thee not!"

Alcamayn turned with a sneer on his ugly face, just as Orondo, who had risen, made a pass at him with his sword. The weapon went wide of its mark, but the outraged husband lurched forward, and fell heavily to the floor, before the horrified spectators could offer assistance.

Yermah raised the fallen head, and as he did so blood spurted from the half-open mouth. Orondo groaned and shivered. His breath came in one stertorous gasp, and all was still.

"It is death!" cried Yermah, in alarm, "death, sudden and terrible! My poor friend!" he repeated, as Setos leaned over and peered into the ashen countenance. Hanabusa hustled Alcamayn roughly, but held him in a viselike grip.

"Thou art a murderer," he exclaimed, "and must answer well for this! Thou art my prisoner!"

The high-priest, Imos, assisted Yermah to lift the dead man, and Setos stood near Ildiko.

The bride was still toying with Alcamayn's ring, and giggling hideously to herself, utterly unconscious of the tragedy being enacted before her.

Rahula fluttered between the two principals. She could not comprehend what had happened, and began to shriek hysterically when iron bands were placed on Alcamayn's neck and wrists.

The panic-stricken guests departed hurriedly, while warriors surrounded the house, and no one was allowed to enter under any pretext whatever.

All eye-witnesses were put under oath, and an armed guard soon filled the room.

Ildiko was kept under surveillance, and Setos found his movements closely watched.

The news went through the city like wild-fire, and the excitement kept the streets alive all night, while the death-watchers sat with the linen-swathed body of Orondo.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

THE TRIBUNALS OF GOD DEAL WITH ALCAMAYN

THE "Tribunals of God," as the courts of justice were called, convened in the Temple of Mars, situated northwest from the center of the city.

It was here that the highest courts assembled four times a year to hear and to judge the most important criminal cases.

There were twelve judges and eighty jurors, who were seated in a semi-circle facing the south, where sapphire tablets in gold plates set forth the ten great laws of the land. In front of them were two blocks of stone, on which the accuser and the accused stood. Outside this were seats for the jurisconsults, hedged in by a wall of solid masonry, always guarded.

The building itself was square, with each corner exactly on a cardinal point, and finished with square towers, from the tops of which the decisions were announced at sunset.

The size of the temple was one three-hundred-thousandths of the diameter of Mars.

Outside the walled enclosure were quarters for the jurisconsults and their families, also for the students and the instructors. A long subterranean passage, dimly lighted, led to the chambers for solitary confinement, and it was from the arches overhead that criminals under death-sentence were executed, by being hung by the heels.

Dull gray walls, ceilings and floors greeted the eye everywhere, while leather and iron fittings added to the gloom and depression. Over the door of the main entrance was the inscription:

"THE WISE EMPLOYMENT OF PUNISHMENT IS THE BEST MEANS OF TEACHING THE LOWER ANIMALS: MAN LEARNS ONLY BY EXPERIENCE, WHICH IS A VARIED FORM OF PUNISHMENT."

The awning over the head of the presiding judge was a splendid woolen tapestry, representing the "Judgment of Hirach," and underneath was the inscription:

"THE MISFORTUNE OF THE CRIMINAL IS THAT HE MAKES A BAD BARGAIN: HE GIVES SO MUCH FOR SO LITTLE."

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As hierophant and Past Grand Servitor, it was Yermah's duty to preside at Alcamayn's trial. His official robe for this occasion was flame-colored, with belt, bracelet, and thumb-ring of iron set with amethysts, while on his head was a skeletonized iron crown.

The extreme gravity of the case hastened the proceedings, which were concluded on the following Tuesday — Mar's day. In ordinary circumstances it would have been considered a monstrous thing to appeal with such haste to an extraordinary tribunal; but the diversity of frictional causes underlying the main issue made it expedient to act with vigor and promptitude.

The people themselves claimed the right to punish

crimes of peculiar gravity or of exalted personages. Since the action pertained to their Servitor, they were the ones most grievously wronged, and they clamored loudly for the life-blood of the jeweler.

Alcamayn's life should be forfeited to the state because of high treason, inasmuch as he had made it impossible to maintain traditional relations with other nations, by removing the only man of consecrated blood capable of carrying out the solemn covenants.

It was Hanabusa's duty, as accuser, to present the findings of this tribunal to Yermah for final consideration.

The high-priest, Imos, received similar instruction later in the day, when the warrior-priests, without a dissenting voice, found Alcamayn guilty of sin against the Holy Pneuma,[1] because by curtailing Orondo's physical life, he had cut the ego's earth experience short, thus dooming his victim to early reincarnation. Death, incurring a similar fate, was but just retribution.

Setos must stand as an accuser when the final trial began. In his own selfish way, he was attached to Ildiko; but he could have killed her with his own hands for having placed him in such a difficult position. He had no pity for her blighted prospects.

The father was enraged against the daughter, because he knew that no man would offer her marriage again — that she must live in perpetual disgrace.

Pity her? Not he! Had she not dashed his ambitions at the very moment of fulfillment? Was his incipient greatness always to be subservient to infe-

[1] The Breath of Life.

riors? Was he never to have the opportunity to show what was in his heart?

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Poor Ildiko! Frivolous feather-brain that she was, many a sympathizing glance fell upon the closed windows of her bridal chamber. She was not allowed to return home again. So in hideous mockery she paced the floor of this room, sick to death of its luxury, and hating the sight of her wedding finery.

Yermah found her lying prostrate, twisting her hands in and out of her disheveled hair; and when he gently raised her and spoke kindly to her, she broke into a fit of hysterical laughter, infinitely sadder than tears. She had the curses of her father still ringing in her ears, and remorse held such carnival that blows would have been easier to bear.

"Beat, curse and abuse me, Yermah, or I shall go raving mad! Don't even look at me kindly! I cannot endure it!"

Yermah feigned not to hear her.

"Where is Rahula?" he asked in an ordinary tone. "Hast thou seen her?"

"No. She must be with Alcamayn."

"That were not possible. He is in solitary confinement, and is allowed to see no one. She is probably occupied with his defense."

"Dost thou think there is any hope for him? I have loved him from early childhood — more than I did Orondo," she said simply. "Canst thou not plead for him?"

Even with tear-stained, grief-distorted face, Ildiko was attractive and winning.

"All that is possible will I gladly do, for both thy sakes."

The Dorado talked long and earnestly with her, knowing that words would be a harmless safety-valve for her tortured mind, and when he left her she was comparatively calm.

Yermah was as good as his word. In the Temple of the Sun, on the following day, he made an eloquent plea for compensation for Ildiko, since Alcamayn had stolen away her senses by drugging the wine she drank in honor of the state. The councilors by vote exculpated her from all blame in Orondo's death, and allowed her the living usually given the widow of a Grand Servitor. It was a foregone conclusion that they would fix the death penalty on Alcamayn for depriving the Azes of their rightful ruler.

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The unit of ancient society was the community or gens; of modern society, the individual. Since the first ten great laws were compiled and graven on tablets of stone, there have been but two forms of civilization. One exemplifies the principles of brotherhood; the other, crystallizes around individualism. Both ideals have had many variations and degrees of success in racial and national expression.

The Egyptians thought their laws were given them by Menes, the Greek Hermes; the Hindus believed that Menes received his laws direct from Krishna.

The Lacedæmonians claimed that Apollyon inspired Lycurgus to write them wise and just laws for their guidance.

Many branches of the Aryan race look to Zoroaster as the man to whom the Good Spirit communicates the first rules of government.

The Toltecs say it was Mexi; the Quiches ascribe

it to Votan; while, through the Jews, we claim Moses as the great law-giver.

But from whatever source, the principal rules are the same. In none is property held to be of greater value than human life. The precepts of Christianity do not contradict this teaching, but actual practice is often quite another matter.

The legislation known as labor laws would be difficult to explain were precept and practical Christian civilization the same thing.

The first step inspired by selfishness was to substitute the family for the tribe, making it a corporation sole, so that co-ownership was the original law of property.[1]

In Yermah's day, no one could forfeit or transfer his rights, and all holdings went back to the community at death. Personal property was interred with the body, in order to destroy the magnetic attraction which would still hold the astral man to the earth, especially to his familiar haunts.

There was no law of crimes, no criminal jurisprudence such as we have to-day. But the community had the right to compel the wrong-doer to compound for injuries inflicted. The state undertook to mete out punishment the same as an individual would do in similar circumstances.

When speedily caught, a criminal was sure to suffer severely. If apprehended a year later, the penalty was much lighter as the fictitious anger of the state was supposed to be cooler.

Towers of Refuge were not only common to Asia,

[1] Co-ownership of property necessitated the institution of civil marriage, in order to define inheritance.

but were found all over the Americas and the accused was immune when once inside its sacred walls.

The trial of Alcamayn was a proceeding wholly extraordinary, irregular and independent of set rules and fixed conditions. Yermah sat with the Council of State, and was deputed by them to represent the civic interests in the final judgment.

Equity was supposed to flow from the conscience of the Servitor. He, alone, could pronounce the death sentence, after the judges and jurors had passed upon the case.

Yermah asked Ben Hu Barabe, the civil chief and law-giver of the Monbas, to personate him in the commonwealth. The four preliminary trials were before the assembly of the tribes, represented by Ben Hu Barabe; the tribunal of God, represented by Imos; the assembly of one hundred, represented by Setos; and the laws of nations, represented by Hanabusa.

These men were the four accusers, who appeared before Yermah and demanded the forfeit of Alcamayn's life, when, at sunrise, the final sitting began.

In addition to the twelve judges and eighty jurors, there were as many more students, who stood behind their elders, and in this way learned to practice in the courts.

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With a thin iron collar around his neck, to which three chains were attached, held by a soldier on each side and one behind, Alcamayn was led before the Tribunal.

He was dressed in black, with a light weight iron crown on his head shaped like an inverted pentagram.

The high-priest, Imos, preceded Alcamayn, carrying a rod of iron in his hand. Stationing himself at the left of the prisoner, the high-priest waited Yermah's question:

"Why comest thou here, Imos?"

"To claim the life of this man," touching Alcamayn with the rod, then laying hold of him.

The prisoner made a show of resistance, until Yermah bade them relax their hold.

"Alcamayn, what means thy interference?"

"I crave the right to establish and prove my innocence," answered the accused in an unsteady voice.

"May the life within me be forfeited, if there be no justice in my cause." Imos spoke with decisive emphasis.

"If this man merit not death, take thou vengeance on me," said Ben Hu Barabe, standing beside Imos.

"The same dread fate await me too, if there be reason for merciful judgment here." Hanabusa spoke with deliberation, as he joined the other accusers.

"Woe is me!" wailed Setos, unsteadily. "Yet I and all my posterity would be forever accursed if we hindered justice. I am here to claim the life of Alcamayn, and to stake my own on the demand."

He did not look at the jeweler, and it seemed difficult for him to stand, while the accused said in a low voice:

"May I be early deprived of physical life in four succeeding incarnations, if I be not innocent of this charge."

"Thou standest in a perilous position, Alcamayn," cautioned Yermah. "Weigh thy words well!"

"Had my days four times their natural span, I should risk them without fear."

There was no bravado in Alcamayn's tone or manner.

He feared the worst, and there was a hungry, desperate expectancy in every glance. The days had gone over his head like years.

Stripped of all finery and with close cropped hair, his bat-wing ears stood out from his head. The hawk face, clean-shaven, showed the cunning and courage of a cornered rat. The hunchback's supreme egotism stood him in good stead, but the inner man had no compunction for what he had done. He was appalled at the unexpected death of Orondo, never having counted on such an outcome.

But what criminal ever does look forward to being caught and overwhelmed with his own guilt?

Alcamayn had succeeded in getting even with his tormentors, and he was secretly glad of it. If it had only been Ildiko who had died instead of Orondo, he would have been entirely satisfied; and, as it was, persuaded himself that he was innocent of any wrongdoing.

He hated Orondo, and the jilted man deemed that justifiable since his rival's success had been a prime cause of humiliation.

The prisoner was seated on a revolving stool, and made to face each judge and juror while the questions and responses were being given.

One of the most damaging circumstances against Alcamayn was his own soberness compared with Ildiko's sudden intoxication. He reluctantly admitted that he had deliberately gone to the wedding

meditating revenge, and had carefully carried it out at the first opportunity.

The accused did not deny that he was actuated by a petty, mean jealousy, although he scorned the insinuation of loving Ildiko. His deformity told against him greatly, because of the belief that the body was but an outward expression of the inner man.

Each of the four accusers took turn in examining the testimony, analyzing the motives, inquiring minutely into extenuating circumstances; and the judges and jurors were equally divided for and against.

The arguments continued all day, but at sundown the decision had been reached.

There was no prerogative of pardon. The commonwealth had the right to interfere directly and by isolated acts, to avenge itself on the author of the evil which it had suffered.

"Alcamayn, hast thou aught to say which can delay judgment about to be meted out to thee?"

Yermah spoke perfunctorily.

The strain was telling on them all; and Alcamayn, more dead than alive, answered mechanically:

"I have none."

"Alcamayn, face thy accusers."

The condemned man dragged himself to his feet, and stared doggedly ahead of him.

"Alcamayn, never more canst thou be heard in thine own behalf. I charge thee, as death must soon be thy portion, speak the truth. Art thou guilty?"

The stillness was intense.

Every man waited to see if the convicted man

would imperil his immortal soul by withholding the truth.

The prisoner felt this. He knew what a shock he could give them, and the leading passion being strong upon him, he answered defiantly:

"I am innocent!"

Trouble had not softened him. On the contrary, he had grown bitter and vindictive as he realized his desperate straits.

Yermah picked up an iron-headed arrow, as the guard brought the prisoner forward. Leaning toward him, he drew a circle over Alcamayn's heart, and then made a square around it with the arrow.

This was the death sentence.

"May the Father of Justice and Mercy claim the divine within thee, Alcamayn!"

The doomed man merely bowed his head.

"Let Saturn's day witness the carrying out of this decree. Away with him!"

Yermah felt the words more keenly than the man to whom he had spoken them. Alcamayn's thin upper lip curled in a sardonic smile, which did not leave his face while the badge of death, a square of sheet iron with a white enamel circle in the center, was being fastened to his breast.

The condemned man was kept in solitary confinement. Once the door of his cell closed upon him, he gave way to a frenzy of despair, butting his head against the wall with so much violence that the guards were obliged to tie him down to the floor.

Frantic hysteria closed his throat, and threatened strangulation, and when his teeth were pried open, he shut them on his tongue with such force as to nearly sever the end.

Shamans worked with him all night, but nothing save physical exhaustion quieted him. Under sentence of death, the miserable man was allowed to receive any consolation possible.

There were no restrictions placed upon the visit of friends, the only regulation being a complete and thorough search before and after the visit of both prisoner and caller.

Long before light, came Rahula. She was nearly distracted by Alcamayn's shrieks and groans, but tried to show a brave face. The prisoner was sinking into a drowse, and Rahula did not know whether he recognized her or not. She had brought him some ripe persimmons, and occupied herself trying to make him comfortable.

To her surprise he awoke hungry, and did full justice to the appetizing meal prepared for him. There was no objection to her providing the food, but the authorities insisted that she should partake of it freely. So it happened that she furnished and ate all meals with him.

Many and long were the confidential talks these two had together, and on more than one occasion Rahula committed to picture-writing things that were told her.

Nothing escaped her tightly closed lips, nor did she utter one word of complaint. She was surly and defiant when questioned, but made no resistance at the last moment.

On Friday morning, Ildiko, pale and agitated, knocked timidly at the outer gate, and begged to see Alcamayn. He received her quietly, but there was not a shade of pity for her broken fortunes.

The widow's face was drawn and pinched, and

she looked utterly forlorn and helpless while the search went on.

Once in the cell, she tried to speak cheerfully to her childhood friend, but she could not prevent a revulsion of feeling when she saw the perfumed dandy shorn of all his splendor; his long, thin neck and large ears grated upon her senses unpleasantly.

How was it ever possible that she had loved him?

Ildiko began to suspect that it was remorse and not affection which had prompted her feelings. She had never practiced self-restraint, but had always given voice to every passing emotion. What she said was true at the time it was spoken, or, at least, she thought it was.

Alcamayn huddled over in a corner opposite, unable to control his repugnance, and instinctively sharing something of the aversion apparent in Ildiko.

Wholly surprised and half-frightened at herself, Ildiko arose to take leave. She tried to feel very sad, but instead of the passionate tears, and protest of undying love, she gulped down a dry sob, extended a cold clammy hand, and in a queer little voice, said with painful articulation:

"May Infinity hover over and guard thee!"

"May Justice find and abide with thee!" he answered, ignoring her proffered hand.

Alcamayn held her eyes unflinchingly until she reached the door, to which she made a halting journey, hoping that he would say some kind word in farewell.

This was balm to his revolted feelings, and he had a grim sort of satisfaction in knowing that she had sued for his good will, and had been repulsed.

It was one way to revenge himself upon her choice of another for a husband. The homicide really cherished no ill will toward Orondo. Ildiko was the one he despised, and he would leave her his dying curses.

The last hour of his life was spent with Yermah, who did all that could be done to sustain the wretched man through the anticipation of the coming ordeal.

Imos prepared the spiced and tinctured wine, which Alcamayn was obliged to sip through a straw. This was done to produce drowsiness; when the victim was fully under its influence, a white powder having the quality of cocaine was sprinkled upon his face to deaden pain.

Alcamayn's under-garments were of chamois-skin, over which was a loose robe of coarse cloth made from the beaten fiber of nettle. A hideous mask was put over his face, to show that his lower self would be disguised in animal form in its next incarnation.

Ben Hu Barabe and Hanabusa placed Alcamayn gently on the floor, giving directions to the priests and warriors as to the number of cords which should bind his body.

When securely pinioned they sewed him up in another layer of coarse cloth, and then placed him on a litter. This they carried up to the second floor, where by stout cords they tied Alcamayn's feet to the arch in front of his cell. The body was held upright on a trap-door, and allowed to fall full length, striking the head upon the floor.

"May all who thus invert good be compelled to die head downward!" said Imos, solemnly, as the

trap-door closed, and the executioners stood, blankly facing each other.

Great care was taken to preserve a semblance of lifelike proportions in the outlines of the funeral basket, to enable the spirit to manifest easily at some future time.

Four lusty tamanes shouldered the basket-covered remains and the little procession filed out of the temple inclosure.

Men, women and children turned their backs as it passed, and there was no one to receive the body when it was delivered to the priest at the judgment hall of Hirach.

Early next morning Imos announced in the Temple of the Sun that Alcamayn's body had been refused burial.

Then the citizens went to the hall, and carried the remains down to Land's End, opposite Point Lobos. When the strongest ebb tide was at its full, they cast it into the sea. At this point the current runs at the rate of from three to four knots an hour, and the people knew that when once washed out to the north, the body could never, in time or eternity, return again to Golden Gate Bay.

The continuous barkings and roarings of the now extinct sea-cows which congregated on the rocks in that vicinity were supposed by the populace to be wails and lamentations from the unfortunate dead whose bodies had been literally condemned as food for the fishes.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

RAHULA'S DENUNCIATION OF YERMAH — AT THE FUNERAL OF ORONDO

THE Azes believed that every part of a man's body had a counterpart in the world of matter. At the moment of dissolution, the individual ego was thought to be re-united to the Absolute, if Will, which is the real body of the individualized spirit, is free from Desire. If bound by these ties, it must reincarnate again, and it was thought possible to sink so low in the scale that the life principle would contact the animal kingdom.

These people did not practice cremation of the dead, because they did not think it right to skip all the intervening purgations, or reincarnations, by projecting the ego back into the Absolute at once.

They embalmed their honored dead and mummified their bodies in order that the individuality might be preserved, so that in the next incarnation memory might function on the physical plane.

There are excellent examples of this practice found in the catacombs in Mexico and Peru as well as in Egypt where the descendants of Atlantis employed the same rites. The Egyptian "Book of the Dead" pertains entirely to initiation, or the finding of the Perfect Way in this life; and the well-known portions of it found with mummies are simply certificates of initiation.

It is a curious fact in psychology that, so long as the physical body is preserved, the astral counterpart cannot disintegrate; and as memory is a function of the astral man, the Egyptian adepts expect to take up their life work again with a full knowledge of the past.

The negative magnetic laws govern the astral and psychic qualities of man, while the positive electric currents control the physical. Time and space have no influence over the former conditions — facts which were well known to primitive civilizations.

The papakoo, or cemetery of Tlamco, was a terraced range of hills, south of Mountain Lake, then called the River of Mystery, which still lies between Golden Gate Park and the ocean on the north. It is much shrunken in proportions and depth, though retaining the same oblong outline. The hills form a natural divide between the Park and Sutro Heights, and then as now jutted into the ocean at their northern extremity.

For six weeks the embalmers were engaged with the body of Orondo, and when they had finished, it was completely mummified. They put salt on his breast, as an emblem of immortality, and a gold gorget around his neck, with the inscription:

"O Hidden Being! Turn thy face toward the body of thy son!"

The corpse was wrapped in fine linen bandalettes, and a Saint Andrew's cross of copper was laid over the region of the heart outside the enveloping swathes.

In the northwestern portion of the city, at the upper end of the lake, was the Temple of Uranus,

where dwelt the priesthood who had charge of the dead.

This mound had a circular earth vallum seven hundred feet in diameter, which is one three-hundred-thousandths of the diameter of the planet Uranus.

It was here that Orondo's body was prepared for burial, and it was from this place that the funeral cortége embarked. While it was being rowed across the lake, the mourners scattered rushes on its smooth surface as a sacrifice and peace-offering.

Yermah, Setos, Imos and Hanabusa rowed the funeral barge; and when it landed at the opposite end, they lifted the mummy onto the catafalque standing ready to receive it.

All that was mortal of Orondo was laid in a bed of aloe, yew, cypress, weeping-willow, rosemary and yellow marigolds, while over him was spread the fated mantle given to him by Yermah. On top of this was the sword, helmet and shield of the deceased.

A long line of warriors, with reversed spears, whose pennants trailed in the dust, marched up a long line of mastodon-headed sphinxes, to the judgment hall of Hirach, where the deceased would be tried for the deeds done in the body.

"O Maker of the material world! Thou Holy One! Whither shall we bring, where shall we lay, the bodies of our dead?"

After the body came Yermah, Setos, Imos and Hanabusa, followed by civic deputations, priests and priestesses, and a great concourse of people.

The judgment hall stood on the south side of Mountain Lake, near the plowed out Golden Gate,

and had a rock foundation which the Azes called Gharepo. The building was erected in the exact center of a huge pentagram, the apex of which was on the rock Gharepo, the east foot on the north peak of Las Papas, and the west in the ocean, near the Cliff House shore. The feet of Hirach were correlated to those of the pentagram. He was stepping from the ocean to the mountain, signifying the involution of the ego from the astral universe into the material world. Hirach was a counterpart of the Amen of Revelation, who had " one foot on the sea and one on solid land," etc.

The circle surrounding Hirach described the orbit of Mars, which corresponds to the body of Desire. The sixth labor crushes this principle, but in so doing opens the path for the initiate to measure the proportions of the cosmos; and properly adjust them one to the other.

Mars is the planetary phase of the Red Dragon, the eating of whose heart forms the means by which Sigierd, the Norse hero, attained Wisdom. The heart is triple, emblematic of the three cardinal virtues, Will, Aspiration and Harmony, and their common center — the spirit, was the altar in the middle of the judgment hall.

From the center of the holy of holies were struck the distances of the four inner planets; hence it not only showed the three radii of the earth, but the three phases of Hermes, or Wisdom, and the ego in the three worlds, which in this instance was the higher personality sitting in judgment on the deeds done in the body.

The relative size of the earth was represented by the tip of the devotee's fore-finger as he entered

the western door and held up his hand in adoration and salutation to Deity.

The structure was shaped like a cross, and was surmounted by tall spires. Over the entrance was an entablature propped by two square capitals. Above this was a frieze with the hieroglyphs of Truth, Fire and Light surrounded by twelve symbolical groups.

Between the sixth and seventh, a figure knelt and stretched out its arms above the two sacred eyes, symbolizing the north and south. This alluded to the diurnal motion of the sun, which is an implicit promise of resurrection, from the sky above us.

At the ends of the emblematic row was another figure, poising a pair of balances.

In the western arm of the cross was a throne, surmounted by a canopy representing the Tree of Life. The golden fleece hung in its branches, and in the center was the lamb immeshed in a nimbus.

Seated on the throne was Hirach, a priest from the Temple of Neptune, whose face was hidden by a green mask. On his head was a tall conical hat made of alternating stripes of red and green, and the same combination of color was observable in his costume.

The mantle was green; the tunic, red; while the arms and legs were covered with striped cloth, as he sat with arms crossed over his breast. In his right hand was a crook, while in his left was a flail.

Hirach, or Conscious Life, personated the higher self of the dead man, and it was his office to weigh the thoughts, words and deeds of Orondo, against the image of Truth. On each side of him stood a priestess, representing the two phases of truth. One

held a lily in her hand, to show that she stood for Truth in Action; while the other held the quill of an eagle, signifying that she was Truth in Thought, itself.

The two attendants were clothed in trailing white draperies, and their hands were crossed over their breasts. The sleeves came only to the elbow, but were long and wide, like those worn by Japanese women. Only the throat was revealed at the neck, and there was a peculiar allegorical girdle around the waist. These figures were known as Ma.

When we call our mothers "Ma," we are addressing them as the Principle of Truth — a singularly fitting name; since the mother is the literal image of Truth to the child, until he is old enough to discover it by reasoning processes.

Osiris, the spirit within the earth, draws every soul to him with a crook, and repulses it with a flail.

The ceremony about to be enacted quaintly set forth the trials by the law of causation, or experience, undergone by the individual in the process of being drawn into and thrown out of earth life. It was an enactment of the tragedy within each human heart.

On a square lectern in front of Hirach was a huge parchment scroll, tied with seven seals. By an ingenious arrangement, the lectern was also a support for a pair of balances. On the left side was a gold vase containing the heart of Orondo, which was soon to be weighed against a small image of Truth, on the right scale.

Between Hirach and the altar of offerings sat four intercessors, or Associate Judges, representing the material body, the astral body, soul and spirit.

They were dressed in black, gray, purple and green.

The official mourners, selected from each of the guilds, and from the priesthood, made offerings to the four elements in nature corresponding to the four attributes of man. That to earth was a bunch of bearded wheat; that to water, a pond-lily; that to air, a white dove; while that to fire was a chalice of bergamot oil. After being consecrated and blessed, the offerings were brought forward by men dressed in blue, and laid upon the altar in their proper succession. The fires in the sacred urns in the burial service were used, in order that the life-principle present in fire might find the individual body it once inhabited.

Along the outer wall, in a semi-circle, were seated the forty-two assessors who were to try this novel case. They wore cloth-of-gold robes, and had a golden feather of Truth in the headbands over their closely curled hair, to show that they represented mental traits, and corresponded to the forty-two phrenological organs of the brain.

These assessors were divided into three groups, distinguishable by the color of their mantles. The first typified the psychic attributes, and pertained to the front of the cerebrum; the mental to the middle part of the head; while the material stood for the cerebellum.

The problem of the perfect life is solved by the even balance of these parts of the brain with the corresponding worlds of cosmic essence.

When the remains were placed between the altar of offerings and the lectern, the priestesses knelt on each side, followed by the official mourners.

Every eye was turned anxiously toward the Left-Hand Path, as the second entrance was called. Any citizen who had been wronged by the deceased in his lifetime, had a right to come into the temple and accuse him.

There had been mutterings and ominous shakings of the head, but no one seemed to be able to make definite statements.

Suddenly the door was flung open, and Rahula came in with an angry scowl on her face. She had on the mantle and red cap of the accuser of souls, and back of her was a numerous following; they, also, were dressed in red.

Each face whitened, and there was a tense, apprehensive feeling everywhere.

Yermah and Setos supported Ildiko, who rushed forward and threw herself at the foot of the bier. She was completely shrouded in black. On her head was a round wreath of black ivy, having a crown and long pennants of white gauze in the back. Her close-cropped hair was still better concealed by a broad band of the gauze which fastened to the wreath and came down under the chin, hiding the ears.

Ben Hu Barabe and Alcyesta stood near Ildiko, ready to offer assistance and sympathy, while Hanabusa supported Setos.

Oahspe, the Sun Virgin, enveloped in black, and wearing a gold mask for unknowable Deity, broke the seal and unrolled the parchment. As she did so, Imos prepared to record the verdict. Flinging his arms out on either side, he exclaimed:

"I give glory to Hirach, lord of the essences, living in truth! I have come to thee, bringing to thee

truth. Where art thy attendant gods? Grant that I may be with them in thy company."

A deep guttural voice behind the mask responded:

"Peace will not abide with thee until thou hast overthrown thine enemies."

From out the phalanx on the right, Yermah stepped forward and lifted a determined face, pale as the linen robes he wore. Bringing his hands together high over his head, he said:

"Homage to thee, O Master of Truth! I come toward thee! I am here to contemplate thy splendor!"

"Give thy tongue truthful license, but speak no evil of the dead," was the admonition of the Hirach.

Repeating the sign of asseveration, the Dorado began:

"Great and mighty Hirach, thou knowest that the gloom of the tomb is but the cradle of the sun. Before thee lies a pure, unsullied soul.

"Orondo had the three cardinal virtues of piety, because he loved his Creator, loved virtue, and loved man. He gave bread to the hungry, water to the thirsty, garments to the naked. He who perceives him says he comes in peace.

"May he enter into rest, praised; may he go out, beloved — for there is no more fault or evil in him. Save him; protect him; for his mouth is clean and his hands are pure. He was free from the oppression of the widow and the fatherless.

"There was not by his fault either a fearful, or poor, or suffering or wretched one. He did not cause any one to weep.[1] He —"

Rahula who had been growing more and more ex-

[1] Egyptian Book of the Dead.

cited, rushed to Yermah's side, and throwing her hands up wildly, cried out:

"Hirach, thou who art mirrored in truth, palsy the tongue departing from thy formula! Orondo merits not an honored place in the Vale of Peace. The fishes yearn for his body. He lived not in truth, nor walked in the ways acceptable to the gods of magic mystery."

What more she would have said was drowned in a chorus of protest from the warrior-priests. The mourners added their supplications, and the priestesses murmured:

"Om — ah! Om — ah! Om — ah!"

Without noticing the interruption, Yermah completed his sentence.

"Orondo did no evil. Nothing can be produced against him. He committed no violence, nor did he torment any heart. No one was by him treacherously slain."

"Hear him, O just powers! This man stands here and claims to be a vehicle for truth! How darest thou say that Orondo caused no man to be treacherously killed?

"On both thy heads lie the curse of Alcamayn's death. Robbed of his own by Orondo, and done to death by thee!

"Thou art a mighty representative in the Hall of the Two Truths. Hear me, Yermah! — A mother's curse is on thee! Thou art a doomed man!"

"A mother's curse!" exclaimed Yermah, in a whisper, sharing the consternation around him.

A curse in the time of the Dorado was a thing of fearful import.

The intemperance of her speech showed the uncontrollable rage of Rahula.

"Yes," she screamed,—"a mother's curse! Alcamayn was my first and only born. Oh, there is no need of thy horrid looks! He never knew the relationship. Because of thy spiritual father, Akaza, thou hast a heritage of my hate. But for him I should have claimed my son."

Seeming to realize that temper had carried her too far, Rahula tried to repair what she had already said. Setos made a threatening gesture toward her, while every one looked at his neighbor, and said in an undertone:

"She is a black magician. Akaza was obliged to take her child away from her."

Her attendants hissed angrily and stamped with their feet to prevent Yermah from being heard. He realized that the demonstration was against himself personally, and was appalled at the virulence of the attack, but went bravely on.

"Orondo afflicted no one; neither did he commit perfidy. He was never an accuser, and was only angry when there was just cause —"

"Thou art a monstrous liar! He had just cause to be angry with thee, who enticed his first love away, and repaid him with another man's choice."

Crossing over to him and shaking her finger in his face, defiantly, Rahula fairly shrieked:

"Thou hast imperiled thy immortal soul! Dearly shalt thou pay for thine own perfidy! I dare tell thee to thy face, thou art guilty of the unpardonable sin! Thou who wert coward enough to compel thy dead friend to marry this poor misguided creature

lying at thy feet! For this cause my Alcamayn died in dishonor!"

The warrior-priests clanked their swords angrily, and the smoldering disloyalty was like a tinder-box to the furious gestures and acts of the factions.

Setos grabbed Rahula by the arm and shook her violently before she would heed him.

"Hast thou no sense of decency, Rahula? Cease thy upbraidings, else wilt thou ruin all!"

She quailed before his determined look and was silent.

Shaking like a leaf and wounded to the death in his tenderest parts, Yermah once more essayed to speak.

Finding that he could not command his voice, he turned appealingly to the musicians, who responded with a funeral air. When they had finished, Yermah, with tears coursing down his cheeks — which he made no effort to conceal, said:

"Hirach, as I expect to stand face to face with thee finally, hear me! In that I love Orondo well, conscience doth acquit me of evil intent toward him. Whatever service he rendered me was a pleasure to him, and was of his own choosing. That he preferred duty to success, is one more reason why his bones should be interred with the blessed. There was no guile in him.

"He was as tender as a woman, as simple as a child, and faithful unto death. The heart weighing even in the scales of Truth was burst in twain by the sorrows which oppressed his high courage. Struck down in the flower of manhood, hurled through the Gates of Light by unseemly circum-

stance, Orondo, the soul of honor, merits the rite of consecration. Hear, Hirach, as thou wouldst in turn be heard, and grant as thine own hope of future reward may prompt thee!"

The non-resistance and manliness of Yermah did not fail to appeal to a people equable in temper and given to just decision. The waves of feeling which surged through the temple made him aware of this, though the sounds were almost inaudible.

Every one waited in dread suspense for Rahula's final plea. She was still laboring under ill-suppressed excitement, and resentment blazed anew as she spoke.

"Hirach, thou who art unshaken by emotion or desire, hear and give heed! Orondo was ever the craven tool of him who stands here in his defense. He sought more to obey the will of his master than the will of the gods. Once again I beseech thee, give his body to the fishes!"

"No! no! no!" burst from the lips of the mourners, the priestesses, and the warrior-priests, augmented by the intercessors, too.

Yermah stood with his hands clasped and head bowed low. His dejection and silence angered Rahula still more, because she instinctively felt that he was right, and that she could not provoke him into a show of resistance. She hated him for the sympathy he had unconsciously aroused.

"Finally, I demand this body of thee, Hirach!

"Bloody deeds shall follow thy refusal. Never canst thou make it right to bless this man, while Alcamayn's shade is doomed to wander through myriad years because of him. I charge thee to weigh and consider thy decision!"

Hirach, using the flail for a baton, waved for silence.

Then the two intercessors, earth and water, arose and pointed to the left. Thus far the decision was against Orondo.

The kneeling figures arose and joined the warrior-priests in supplication. The remaining intercessors, air and fire, stood and pointed to the right.

With bated breath they waited for Hirach's action. In an impressive silence he arose and pointed to the right.

"Haille! Haille! Haille!" cried the people, in a spontaneous outburst, which a sense of decorum quickly quelled.

"Let the heart of Orondo be given back to him. Let him go into the Hall of Mystery by the Right-Hand Path," read Imos in a sonorous voice.

As soon as the verdict was announced, the funeral cortége formed as it came, and filed out of the temple. Rahula and her followers departed to the left, with their arms crossed before their faces, and their heads drooping under the knowledge of defeat.

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A granite sarcophagus was placed at the entrance of the long tunnel-like tomb, cut deep into the side of the mountain. Here was desposited all of the personal belongings of Orondo, sealed up in curious-shaped jars and baskets. After the body was placed in the tomb, these were laid around it, and the whole securely sealed.

A never-dying perfume-lamp of wrought bronze was suspended over the head, which was laid to the west. The granite doors were hermetically closed, and Orondo was finally left to sleep with the justified.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

"DOWN WITH THE APOSTATE, YERMAH"— STRIFE IN TLAMCO

"THOU knowest, Imos, how I execrate the memory of Akaza," said Setos, as the two sat in conference, at the high-priest's house, shortly after Orondo's burial.

"So do I. How often has he come between the sacred hierarchy and their rights. He was always intent upon the spirit rather than on the ritual practice of our faith. By his will Yermah is made hierophant, and I, who have served a lifetime, am cast aside with scant courtesy."

Imos was a man advanced in years, having a broad high forehead, aquiline nose, square-cut eyebrows, and thin, finely compressed lips. His bald head, protruding like the knob of a knee, revealed a combative and tyrannical disposition.

Setos had much ado to conceal a grin of satisfaction, as the high-priest bared his secret ambition. He was unusually affable as he answered:

"Thou art shamefully ill-used, but I am thy brother in misfortune. When war devastated Atlantis, Akaza stood continually before the rabble, out-tonguing them in demands. The powers of right were on our side; but in the third day's battle he turned the tide of victory by his infernal enchantments. Our gallant spearsmen were advancing

two deep, when he charged them with three bodies of horsemen.

"'It is Akaza!'" cried our leader, Poseidon. "'The traitor comes to certain death.' Some say that bolts from a mangonel struck through our ranks; others, that he cut off the spear-heads. Of this I know not. Poseidon rode at him in mortal combat, but fell uninjured at Akaza's feet. Failing to kill him, he was obliged to give the Dorado as hostage. Ichanor, the war-chief of Poseidon, was compelled to surrender his son Orondo. By this means the schemer contrived to gain supremacy in Atlantis and all her dependencies. So long as he lived oppression hung over me. Thou mayst judge what love I bear his successor."

The two men gave each other a searching glance, which said as plainly as words, "How shall we be rid of him?"

"We must be masters of caution," said the wily priest.

"Suspicion abides not with Yermah and he knows nothing of black art."

A loud rapping at the front door and hurrying feet along the passage-way caused both to rise and listen intently. Simultaneously with the permit to enter, came Cezardis, flushed and in breathless haste.

"Exigency compels the waiving of ceremony," said he. "A great concourse are in the theater listening to Rahula's arraignment of Yermah. By a cunningly contrived tragedy, called 'The Lost Soul' she scores him without mercy, and has given utterance to all that Alcamayn confided to her concerning the Dorado having concealed his divinity in a ruby which he sent to the high-priestess, Kerœcia.

"Yermah broke his vow, and was blaspheming violently when the swift and terrible punishment came. Alcamayn heard his awful words, but feared even to repeat them, lest we be doomed to suffer again. Rahula has inflamed the populace against him, and they are running through the streets shouting: 'Down with the apostate, Yermah! He has committed unpardonable sin against the Ineffable! He shall no longer rule Tlamco!' Dost thou not hear the bugle calls? Signals are flashing from the forts, and the whole city is in uproar."

Many extraneous sounds bore out this testimony; but neither auditor evinced surprise, though both showed concern.

"So," said Setos presently, "the prophecy concerning the lost planet has come true. A great and momentous change is upon us."

"Hast thou not heard the Blessed Books read in the temples?"

"Thou shouldst remember that I have been in the house of enemies. It would have been unsafe for me. Wilt thou refresh early recollections now and hurriedly?"

As far as he was capable, Setos was devout, and was always comforted by the rumble of long words.

Imos had a voice which fitted him for such an occasion, and he was much pleased to have the opportunity to use it. With the proper degree of solemnity, he crossed to the east side of the room, where the books lay, and then making three profound genuflections, he began reading promptly:

In the beginning the Great Spirit, surnamed Cohesion, breathed into chaotic disorder the fire of life. Verily, it

grew to mighty proportions. It had two arms dividing the Supernal from the light of this world, which is darkness to the ones reposing in the sunshine of eternal peace. So vast was the chasm yawning between Spirit and Matter, that no mortal crossed the void for a million years. Then the twilight changed into morning, and there arose from the Celestial Shore an Archangel strong and mighty.

Hirach was his name. May it ever more be blessed! And a great voice was heard in the expanse like unto the sound of a trumpet, saying:

"Who is able to cross the chasm, to give to souls unborn the Key? To open the book to them that therein they may read the Way of life?"

And the bodiless and formless ones sounded the Æolian harps, and sang:

"Hirach is his name! Thrice blessed is he — Hirach of two threefold wings, encircling heaven, earth and the vast ocean! He alone is great; he is able to cross the vast abyss."

Then Hirach called unto himself a great Red Dragon, whose name was Marah — for he shall deceive the nations, and they shall war with one another. He who sat on the dragon was calm and silent. His lofty, godlike brow was wrapped in the golden splendor of the morning sun. Over the deep chasm which divides mortals from the highest thrones swirled the Red Dragon, and the worlds trembled and feared. And the mountains from before whose eyes the clouds had vanished said to the stars shining in the majesty of their being: "Who is the terrible Red Dragon, and whose splendor anointeth the brow of him sitting thereon?"

The stars answered: "From infinity to infinity we roll in our courses; ages on ages have spent themselves in our existence, yet we remember not when the Red Dragon rose into life; neither can we comprehend the splendor on the brow of him who sitteth thereon."

Now as the Dragon gyrated in his course, his fiery breath caused new suns to spring into existence, and new planets

rolled in their orbits around them, peopled with living beings. Then the Dragon exalted himself in pride, and puffed out his cheeks, saying:

"Behold the glorious suns which I have created, to give light and life to all creatures, that they may praise me and give glory for that which I have done."

Then he who sat on the head of the Dragon, clothed in splendor, rose and smote the ugly beast, whose death-agony dashed into pieces the beautiful planet circling between Mars and Jupiter, thus forever destroying the equilibrium between War and Justice. The souls thereon were drawn into the vortex of the earth. With his two tails he laid hold of Mars and Venus, seeking to destroy them also; but Hirach raised the great two-edged sword in his hands and cleft asunder the tails of the Dragon. He cut the body into five pieces, which fell to the earth, and the Dragon was no more.

"Such," said Imos, "is the account of the Red Dragon. It is said that the chain of hills which encircle Tlamco are the remains of his body. Yonder hill to the east, is his skull, and is called Calvu. It is furthermore stated that Hirach shall at the end of the cycle come from a cavern beneath it. Akaza — curses be his portion! says that the Blessed Story is an allegory. He, a viler apostate than his pupil, claimed that he would come again, as Hirach incarnate, to break the power of the black brotherhood."

"Rather let us exterminate the last remnant of them, and give their bodies to the fishes!" was his companion's intemperate rejoinder.

"Face thy duty resolutely, and may victory be on thy side!" said Imos, piously, as Setos hurried out of the house.

"He who holds our destiny, plans all things well. May thy hopes find fruition also!"

Setos knew that his seditious work among the warriors was ready to bear fruit, but he was gratified that Rahula had provoked the outburst. She had been in a frenzy of rage since her defeat in the judgment hall, and this was her revenge. Setos was determined to take advantage of it and be made Grand Servitor of the Azes.

* * * * * * *

The theater stood on a sloping hill southeast of Lone Mountain. It faced the south, shielding the spectators from the north wind. They had a commanding view of the bay and islands in the foreground and the tawny leonine hills in the distance.

The edifice was a semi-circle, provided with tiers of seats, and would accommodate many thousand people. It was an earth embankment fitted with stone seats and a sanded floor, with an open roof, supported by stout poles. An arch under the right wing marked the entrance to the stage, and led to subterranean dressing-rooms. There was small provision for artificial setting, the beauty of natural scenery being deemed sufficient.

"Haille! Haille! Haille! Setos sent to deliver us from peril!" cried a company of warriors who were escorting Rahula home from the theater.

"Haille, Setos! Chief of the Turghati — men loyal to the true faith of Atlantis!" exclaimed Rahula, whose disordered dress, sparkling eyes, and flushed cheeks, bespoke her excitement. When she approached Setos, she was trembling violently, but every sense was on the alert.

"Thou who art the man of destiny, come with me," she continued. "I will tell thee all that has happened."

"Rahula, the silver-tongued, is thy worthy forerunner, as Mercury is of the sun. Go with her and then come to the Observatory. Thy presence will put heart into the wavering ones, who are in consultation. Thou mayst depend upon us."

The crowd was noisy and unruly, but Setos understood that the warriors would hold them in check. He followed Rahula indoors. Acting on the impulse of the moment, Setos drew Rahula to him and kissed her passionately.

If he had been blind before, he certainly knew now, and he suddenly realized that she was necessary to his success.

"Thou art worthy of my best love," he said, "and thou shalt command it. Open thy heart to me."

"Thou hast surprised its secret, and made me forget our danger. Death were not unwelcome in this guise," she murmured, nestling down closer in his arms.

"Thy lips must pay forfeit for speech once more, and then thy sweet voice must quell this inward tumult. I could drowse like a sleepy god in thy embrace."

"Duty stern and uncompromising faces us, and we must yield to other influences," said Rahula, slipping out of his arms. "The die is cast, and thou must not falter or linger in sweet dalliance."

"Pearls of wisdom ever fall from thy lips, Rahula. Thy well-chosen words sober me again. What dost thou know?"

She held both his hands to her breast, and looked at him steadfastly.

"I am aware that discontent has been flourishing

like a poisonous weed in Tlamco. It needed but a spark to fan it to a blaze and I have produced that spark. It is in the suspicion that Yermah is an accursed and lost soul. Thou knowest the tradition concerning other calamities in the dim ages. Fan this flame judiciously, and thou wilt sit in the seat of power."

He would have strained her to his breast again, but she eluded him. She was certain of her hold upon him, and was anxious to strengthen it.

"Thou canst not be sure of unqualified support," she went on. "If thou canst not silence Yermah's adherents in argument, then thou must resort to arms."

"Thou art my love, and a wise counselor," he answered, still actuated by gratitude and what he called love. "Go thou to the Camp of Mars, and I will be guided by thee," he added, aiding her in the readjustment of her mantle.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

THE SHOCK OF CONFLICT AND YERMAH'S OVERTHROW

WAR was undertaken for religious purposes — never for conquest — which accounted for the methods used in stirring up sedition in Tlamco.

The object in conquering an outside power was to civilize it; and if captives refused to accept hospitable treatment, they were scattered throughout the country, man for man, and kept under surveillance until reconciled to their positions. No confiscation of property was allowed, and after taking the oath of allegiance, the rebels were returned to their homes.

Setos found Imos laboring with Hanabusa and Ben Hu Barabe, who remained loyal to Yermah. These faithful adherents made earnest and eloquent pleas in his behalf; but, finding themselves powerless, withdrew and prepared to defend the city against inevitable attack.

It was a semicircular bay, five thousand feet across, which brought the water to Montgomery Street up to the days of 'forty-nine. From a line parallel with what is now Market Street, but a little to the north, was a grand canal, deep and wide enough to accommodate all the commerce of Tlamco. These waters terminated in a basin near the junction of present-day Van Ness Avenue and Market Street, where a circular port of entry was strongly fortified.

Leading from this was a broad avenue, which ended in another circular building, half a mile nearer the Observatory, and in a direct line with it. This was, in modern parlance, a bonded warehouse, and was amply protected.

The port of entry was in the center of a circle which included Telegraph Hill, Lone Mountain and the Potrero hills, all of which were formidable fortifications. Rincon Hill, south and directly opposite Telegraph Hill, guarded the entrance to the canal, while Yerba Buena Island, on the east, lined with its center.

A hostile fleet sailing around Telegraph Hill would be under fire from these forts, and as they came into the canal an assault could be made on them from the ramparts and battlements of Nob Hill.

Should enemies approach the port of entry, they would be in range of the mangonel batteries at East Temple, Alamo Hill, and the Temple of Venus, which also shielded the bonded warehouse and the main, or eastern, avenue to the city. On the top of the hill, was another fortification, guarding the approaches to the Observatory, which had a complete system of defense in itself.

South of the Potrero Hill fort was a harbor for the balsas. It is now a broad marsh intersected by Islais Creek. A curved canal separated two fortified hills and turned west to within the radius of the Camp of Mars. The waterway skirted the closely guarded fortification on Bernal Heights.

From time immemorial Mars was not only considered the god of war but the guardian of sailors as well.

On the west side of the camp, a road ran south,

parallel with what is now Valencia Street direct to the port of entry. This was the only approach from the south, and was well protected by the armored hills, where the granaries and storehouses were located.

Much of the food supply came by this route.

Due west of Bernal Heights is a companion hill, which was garrisoned and used as a signal station, being on a line with Mount Olympus, and from the high Observatory tower news could be flashed to all the outlying stations.

The center of the port of entry lined exactly with Telegraph Hill. By this means a message could be sent from Hanabusa's quarters to Mount Olympus and Lone Mountain direct, and thence to the port of entry and Telegraph Hill, thus making it easy to command the entire situation.

The horsemen's camp lay close to Iaqua, west of the Observatory, while the spearsmen's grounds were east. From these points were trained catapults, loaded with highly explosive lead cylinders filled with sharp spikes. Mixed with the spikes were balls containing a stifling, overpowering, deadly smell, which were exploded in the air, to shower the inhabitants, barracks and forts.

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Setos saw with the eye of a military genius the advantage to himself of a sudden attack, and as a politician he felt the danger of remaining inactive in such treacherous times. With a long, hissing screech, four rockets shot into the sky from the signal-stations, electrifying some, but prostrating the spirits of those who loved law and order.

Instantly, the warriors rushed pell-mell into the

streets and confusion seized the populace, who ran about aimlessly, and looked into each other's faces with half-averted eyes, like members of a family who are determined to punish one another, but not too severely.

Around what is now known as Potrero Point came a fleet of thirty balsas, with the blades of the rowers flashing in the sunlight as they rocked and glided over the choppy waves of the bay.

Rowing swiftly to the Rincon Hill fort, they embarked a strong force of spearsmen who were still loyal to Yermah.

Ponderous mangonels capable of throwing darts twenty feet long, shod with bronze points and securely lashed to the shaft with strips of bull's-hide, surmounted each fort. This formidable weapon carried a distance of several hundred feet with sufficient force to penetrate the side of a stoutly built balsa.

On the poop of the foremost galley stood Hanabusa, in full armor, with a black plume in his helmet, while beside him was Ben Hu Barabe. They were both tall and powerful men, and the grim, determined expression on their faces augured ill for the insurgents. Soon their balsas were gliding over the smooth waters of the semicircular entrance to the canal and making directly for it.

"Beware of the bolt!" shouted Ben Hu Barabe, and every man threw himself under the stout oaken seats of the oarsmen, as a murderous missile rose high in the air and fell with a crash on the stone coping of the canal, sending a shower of splinters over the men.

"There is little danger to fear here," said Hanabusa, "as the east fort is still in our possession. It

stands midway between the gangway and basin at the end of the canal, and forms the strategic key to the operations to-day. Yermah will lead a force between that fortress and the granaries, as if ready to fall upon the city, whilst we, with our noisy drums and trumpets, draw the rebels north of the canal, to repulse our feigned attack."

"Wilt thou forgive me for asking if this is thine own or Yermah's plan?"

"It is the Dorado's instruction. He is proving to be a worthy disciple of the great tactician, Akaza, who never failed to gain a victory. See! They are warned of our approach."

As Yermah had predicted, the revolted troops, not being commanded by a leader skilled in strategy, had signaled to the forts around the city for re-enforcements, and then turned toward the canal to repulse the invaders.

A rocket was sent up from East Temple, signaling the defenders to disembark south of the canal. Seeing this, the insurgents swept around the basin to engage in a close-range combat and overwhelm Hanabusa and Ben Hu Barabe by superior numbers.

Before they could execute this maneuver, the glittering ranks of Yermah's own household guards marched through the pass between Las Papas and the Mission Hills, south of East Temple, with a company of horsemen bringing up the rear.

The two columns marched side by side, but separate, that on the right charging the insurgents on the right flank. There were about three thousand men hemmed in between their own ranks and Hanabusa's command.

Finding they were cut off from the main body, the

rebels made a desperate and gallant defense, but were obliged to surrender, with half their force either killed, wounded, or made captive.

Simultaneously, the main column under Yermah wheeled toward the Observatory, driving their enemies before them with great slaughter. The Dorado's guard swept over the rising ground between the center of the city and the Observatory in a solid phalanx nine deep. Behind them came detachments from the fleet at the head of the canal, who harassed the stragglers and completed the general rout.

Archers and swordsmen, cutlass and javelin wielders excelled each other in feats of generous daring, while shield clanked against shield, and spearsmen tilted against spearsmen, in the shock and clamor of fratricidal warfare.

Underneath all their apparent fury was a fraternal, conciliatory spirit, causing the insurgents to make only a half-hearted fight against their hereditary leader.

The revolted troops were oppressed by a secret fear that Yermah's soul was perjured; but this did not overcome their inherent sense of loyalty to him.

"Down with the Mazaleels!" urged Setos, now in the thick of the fight. "Spare not a single apostate! If thou art true-hearted Turghatis, stand by the old beliefs."

He spurred his horse into the fray, shouting:

"Mazaleel! Mazaleel! Mazaleel! Who loves a Mazaleel?"

"Kill! Slay! Burn! Fire every building! Do duty with torch and sword!" hoarsely commanded Imos, seeing that the lines about the Observatory

trenches were wavering. "Who will help me cut a way through to the canal?"

Urged forward by his example and words, a body of warrior-priests threw themselves against Hanabusa's flank, and succeeded in driving him to the water's edge. Many of the oarsmen tried to re-embark, but the fleet was on fire and a swift and terrible conflict ensued.

In the meantime, Yermah had stormed the eastern entrance to the Observatory, which finally yielded, and he rode in under the mocking inscription:

"*Peace and Good Will Abide With Thee.*"

"The victory is ours!" he cried, sheathing his sword, and surveying the Temple of Venus on his left, apparently deserted.

"Take a dozen horsemen," said he to an aide, "and ascertain if the vestals are safe. If so, we will send a strong guard to prevent further disorder and then retreat; for it is not seemly to fight our brethren."

As rapidly as possible, reconnoitering parties were dispatched to discover the damage done and to provide suitable care for the killed and wounded. To this day the native American races make strenuous efforts to prevent their dead from falling into the hands of an enemy.

The defeated troops were ordered back to quarters and Setos was seized and brought before Yermah.

"Back into thy houses under penalty of arrest!" shouted the mounted patrol, as they galloped through the streets, and rode down the turbulent mob. Soon the cry went up:

"Setos is in chains! Run for thy life!" This startling news sent the crowd flying in every direction,

until even the stout-hearted seemed paralyzed by the result, and the defeated ones slunk away to their homes, like children caught in an act of disobedience.

The men were secretly humiliated and ashamed, none of that generation having ever been guilty of insurrection, and they stood aghast at sight of the carnage and slaughter.

The shamans and priestesses ministered to the wounded and dying, and many heart-rending scenes were enacted on the spot where some turbulent spirit had received its quietus.

The marketplace and temple walls were gallantly defended and by nightfall comparative order reigned in the city itself, though heavy firing from the forts told of the strife along the banks of the canal.

Imos, aided by a band of fanatical warrior-priests, was doing all in his power to destroy the fleet. Hanabusa was retreating slowly with his shattered forces, but every inch of the ground was being stubbornly contested. As darkness came on, the balsas slipped by unobserved, and Hanabusa steered for the Camp of Mars with less than half of his original numbers.

The battering-rams and catapults had done deadly work on the feebly defended Camp of Mars. Here the flood-gates of the canal had been opened by a band of marauding insurgents, under cover of the darkness, and the rising tide inundated the whole plain.

Imos marched rapidly across the peninsula, keeping well out of range of the mangonels, and was in possession of the camp when Hanabusa arrived.

Ben Hu Barabe engaged the warrior-priests in a hand-to-hand struggle, while Hanabusa hastened to the signal tower only to find it dismantled. There

being no way to inform Yermah of his desperate straits, he rushed back to his house, and hurriedly securing things necessary for flight, joined in the unequal contest Ben Hu Barabe and a handful of men kept up at the water's edge.

In the uncertain light, the commander could discern only three seaworthy balsas, and into these his followers scrambled, and, pulling Ben Hu Barabe aboard, put to sea, closely pursued by the leaky, disabled or badly manned balsas which had already been captured by the enemy.

On the heels of Hanabusa's flight came a company of horsemen, sent by Yermah, who dashed into camp with drawn sabers and boldly demanded the surrender of Imos. Realizing that he was completely surrounded and that resistance was useless, the high-priest suffered himself to be put on horseback and carried back to Iaqua. Upon arriving there he was brought before Yermah, in company with Setos.

"Why hast thou made war upon me, Setos?"

"Because the Azes deem thee unfit to rule them," was the blunt answer.

"I have no desire for temporal power. Hadst thou confided thy ambition to me, I would have aided thee."

"Thou hast mistaken me. I am only an instrument in the hands of Providence for the deliverance of Tlamco," answered Setos, in his best temple-service manner.

"Thou art incapable of delivering thyself, much less Tlamco. But I desire thee to become Grand Servitor. Art thou willing to accept its full import?"

Setos could scarcely believe his ears. Was the Dorado speaking from choice, or was he sore beset, and capitulating on the best possible terms?

"What dost thou mean by the full import?"

"The law dost require thee to marry. Thou mayst not demand the oath of allegiance without a consort. Atlantis no longer exists and thou must be responsible for the succession."

Setos opened his eyes wide in astonishment when the real nature of the situation dawned upon him and he realized that fear had nothing to do with Yermah's abdication. As soon as he could recover himself, he answered:

"I am willing to fulfill thy conditions."

"Not my conditions, but the law of the ages," corrected the Dorado, with a frown. "Rahula has long been thy willing handmaid. Wilt thou espouse her?"

"Yes."

"And to-night?"

"Yes; but canst thou say as much for her?"

"She shall answer for herself, as she is already under this roof. And while the tamanes conduct her here, wilt thou tell me, Imos, why thou, too, art in bloody array against me?"

Encouraged by Setos's success, Imos answered boldly:

"Because thou art a lost soul, and art unworthy to succeed Akaza."

"For his sake must I endure persecution. But thou art rash in attempting to defy the Brotherhood. Thou art enslaved by forbidden ambition." Yermah's voice quivered with suppressed anger, and his eyes blazed scornfully, but he kept himself under

control. Catching Rahula's eye as she entered, he said with cutting emphasis:

"Every soul is lost on the downward spiral, and can only regain its original position by a long and painful succession of incarnations. Desire is the prison-house of the ego."

Rahula stood abashed, uncertain how much Yermah knew, and just what his speech implied. An uncomfortable and awkward silence followed, which Setos finally broke by stepping forward and taking her by the hand. Then he asked with gentleness:

"Art thou willing to share the perils of office with me? Yermah wishes to make me Servitor of the Azes."

"My heart acknowledges no other master, and my happiness is indissolubly linked with thy fortunes. I am willing to serve thee." She spoke in a low voice, while a flush of triumph overspread her countenance. She was almost as much surprised as Setos had been.

"Name thy witnesses, and let Imos hear thy marriage vows at once. Matters of state compel haste."

All three hated him, but they obeyed with alacrity, nevertheless.

"I will administer the oath of office at sunrise, and at meridian thou must be ready to receive the allegiance of Tlamco," said Yermah later, before leaving for the Temple of Neptune.

He had not lived at Iaqua since Orondo's death.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

THE OATH OF ALLEGIANCE TO SETOS AND RAHULA

SETOS could not refuse the Dorado an armed escort. But there was treachery in the very air, and Yermah did not retire when he found himself alone and safe inside the temple walls.

He could hear Oghi howling dismally in the stable inclosure and in the intense stillness he heard Cibolo pawing the ground and snorting as if some one were prowling on the outside.

Opening the door cautiously, the hierophant peeped into the long, empty aisles, dim and shadowy in the faint light flickering from the lamps overhead. None of his senses relaxed vigilance, as he pressed his ear close to the floor and listened intently.

Yermah had not long to wait before he heard a grating sound, as if some heavy body were being pushed through the north gate. Returning to his room he hastily tied the leathern pouches around his waist containing the relics of Kerœcia and Akaza. He grasped his sword and came back to the door, and was horrified to find a catapult being dragged into position almost against it.

Recognizing Imos, it flashed over him that the high-priest had seized upon Setos's nuptial night to make himself hierophant; but his blood ran cold when he thought of the helplessness of the recluses around him.

Fear and distrust counseled against apprising Setos of the situation, and his own loyal guards were fast asleep, believing him safe at Iaqua.

His heart almost stopped its beating when he comprehended that his enemies were attempting to slip the bolts and chains of the door.

Something caused him to turn his head in an opposite direction, and there he saw an apparition of Kerœcia, luminous and perfect in outline. He could only hold the image a moment; but she smiled and beckoned to him as she flitted through the doorway. Instinct bade him follow her.

It was *his* blood for which the rebels thirsted, and none of the other inmates would be disturbed — Yermah thought, as he ran along the aisle.

While Yermah was unbolting the door, a projectile from the catapult shivered the northern entrance with a crash that rocked and shook the whole structure. The aisles filled immediately with half-awakened monks, but their voices were silenced by an explosion against the opposite wall, which sent the spikes flying in every direction and felled them with stifling and deadly odors.

Yermah could never remember how he succeeded in reaching Cibolo's stall. The sagacious animal seemed to help in getting into his trappings, and Oghi had already buried his teeth in the back of a miscreant slipping up to the half-opened door through which Yermah had passed. The ocelot darted out of the inclosure ahead of Yermah — all the tiger instincts in him aroused and ready to attack the first thing in sight.

Oghi rolled over and over with a victim, marking and maiming him for life. The man's cries brought

assistance; but neither arrows nor sword thrusts dispatched the assailant until several persons had been wounded.

The Dorado found all the wall entrances locked from the outside, which accounted for the absence of guards at the doors. Escape was only possible through the north-gate, and there more than a dozen warrior-priests were waiting for him.

Man and beast knew there was desperate work before them, but they were nerved for the encounter. As he dashed past Oghi, Yermah saw with a sinking heart that the poor creature was writhing in its death agony.

Cibolo laid back his ears, and tried to take a piece out of the arm put forward to seize the bridle. When the animal found that he could not break the ranks at the open gate, he wheeled and kicked at the assailants viciously.

Yermah reined him back, and charged again, using his sword arm constantly. A spear-point pierced the upper part of Cibolo's neck, causing him to squeal shrilly, while an arrow went through the flesh of Yermah's left arm near the shoulder, breaking the point on his armor. A well-directed blow felled his antagonist, and horse and rider cleared the open space at a bound.

The Dorado rode straight to the west into a redwood forest, long since submerged. Covered with dust and faint from exhaustion and loss of blood, with broken armor and disordered dress, he struggled on toward Tlamco's Tower of Refuge, situated on an artificial hill south of the present Alms House.

Upon arrival there, he found the citadel filled with women and children, who had fled from Tlamco

during the day, and among them were Ildiko and Alcyesta.

Yermah only took time to bind up his own and Cibolo's wound before making his way through Visitacon Valley to the bay, where Alcyesta told him Hanabusa and Ben Hu Barabe were expecting him.

"The Turghati have sworn to kill thee," confided Alcyesta, "and it were not safe for thee nor for thy followers to remain even here in this tower."

"Before daylight, this place will be surrounded," added the keeper. "They will suspect thy hiding place. Shouldst thou surrender and stand trial, thou knowest behorehand what the verdict would be."

"Be advised by me," pleaded Alcyesta. "For this purpose am I come."

"Ample provision has been made," urged the keeper. "Go thou quickly. I fear for thy safety."

Seeing that Ildiko prepared to accompany them, Yermah turned to her, saying:

"Why art thou here? Thy father is married to Rahula, and will be proclaimed Grand Servitor in a few hours."

"I know all that thou sayest. But dost thou think I should be allowed to live at Iaqua? If so, thou knowest neither Setos nor Rahula."

"What is thy purpose?"

"To go with thee and thy followers. Do not, I beseech thee, turn me away, since I should be left to perish miserably."

"That is thy probable fate with me."

"So be it."

Seeing that she was not to be dissuaded, Yermah offered no further objection.

The bay extended down to Monterey at that time

— Monterey, the quaint old Spanish town, where the first American flag was unfurled on this coast.

Hanabusa had managed to pick up six other balsas loaded with provisions and manned by stout rowers whose fealty was unquestioned.

When this little remnant of Atlantians and Monbas reached the seas through Monterey Bay, they were the last of the Mazaleels — a term of derision applied to them by conservative Azes. Mazaleel was simply another name for half-breed, and for ages after was a despised epithet.

Steadily and in secret, before there was light enough to betray their movements, the conspirators wheeled the catapult back to the parade-grounds near the Observatory. Thinking that Yermah would return to the temple, they securely closed every door and window.

None of the monks ever awoke from their first insensibility.

Imos ordered the stable-doors to be left open and the north-gate ajar, so that Yermah's absence might be discovered by some passer-by, but he took good care to be at home when the news flew over Tlamco.

He was the first to suggest that the Dorado's flight was to conceal a crime, and was properly shocked and horrified when the facts were made known.

With a preternaturally long face and proper unction, Imos went to Setos, and offered to officiate in Yermah's stead.

Setos was genuinely surprised, yet not displeased over the turn of affairs, and readily agreed with Imos that the temple should be razed and never rebuilt.

He had always opposed the White Brotherhood, and could see them exterminated without regret.

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It was rather an imposing procession that filed out of Iaqua at noon, and marched over the rising ground, lately a scene of bloodshed, to the Temple of the Sun, where Setos and Rahula were to receive the fealty of the populace.

Each male adult in Tlamco, brought earth in a square jar and water in a deep disk for an oath-offering. Unclasping a pair of interlaced bracelets, the citizen placed his right hand flat upon one band, and, detaching the other, carried it to his forehead, saying:

"Name I thee to witness, I make loyal oath by two rings. So help me, All Powerful One."

This formula was repeated thousands of times in the next three days, and then, in response to a general proclamation, the warriors and citizens assembled to give burial to the slain. These were interred in a large circle at the base of Mount Olympus, with their heads turned toward the center.

Setos's first public work as Servitor was to erect a tall shaft with four fire-altars at the base, on the cardinal points, on which sacrifice was offered to the "Martyrs of the Lost Soul," as the dead in this conflict were subsequently termed.

Beginning at the northern side of East Avenue, and circling in a radius of three thousand and ninety feet to the same side of West Avenue, was a set of pillars supporting a low crenellated wall along which was a sentry-path, used for public observation in the residence part of the city.

This crescent gave the distance of the lost planet

from the center of Tlamco, Mount Olympus being in the same radiation. It was indicated again from Las Papas to Lime Point, and also from Lone Mountain to the artificial sugar-loaf surmounted by the Tower of Refuge, south of Blue Mountain, and between Las Papas and Strawberry Hill.

The gilded domes on the Temple of the Sun were the five-pointed star in the center of the crescent, a device which anciently figured as the lost planet [1]— the present star and crescent of the Turkish Empire.

[1] A planet runs through its grand period of life from a formless nebula to a globe, which solidifies into a planet with or without satellites. It is involution as long as the planet is in process of formation; but when matter begins to manifest, the first step in evolution is taken, which goes on from protoplasm to man. Then comes the blooming-time, when this flower of space will scatter its seeds, as did the huge planet once revolving between Jupiter and Mars.

Where once was unity, light and power, we have now a confused mass of asteroids moving in eccentric orbits. This was not merely the experience of a planet, but was a tragedy of the solar system; and in it the extremity of individualism finds exemplification. The mind of humanity is broken and divided in a corresponding manner. Both represent the fluid side of nature, and are correlated to the soul on the downward spiral.

No one claims that the ego contacts through the animal kingdom, but the soul of desire may.

When the latter does so, it is lost — until brought back on the upward spiral by aspiration and harmony, where it becomes one with Divinity.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

THE MEMENTO FOR GENERATIONS — BUILT BY SERPENT KINGS

"ALCYESTA, hast thou the silver casket safe?" asked Ben Hu Barabe, as soon as they were comfortably afloat.

"Yes."

"Give it me."

He leaned forward eager to take it, but she held back, saying:

"Dost thou remember the injunction to loosen the eagles in time of peril and to follow their lead?"

"Yes. I have freed both birds. Dost thou not hear the cowardly gulls screeching with fright because of the eagles' presence?"

"Then thou hadst best confide thy secret."

"Yermah, wilt thou hear me?"

"If it is to accuse thyself, no!"

"It is to give into thy hands a message from Akaza, and to impart to thee the manner of its coming."

"Speak," returned Yermah, in a whisper.

"Before the awful time of wrath, a pair of golden eagles trained in falconry were intrusted to me by our beloved high-priestess, who intended them to be thy companions in the chase. She gave me, also, a ring set with diamonds, which I carried safely until I met Akaza after we left our battered balsa. I

should never have known how, or when, the ring and the birds left me, had I not received this from the hierophant."

He handed over a tiny, silver locket taken from the casket in Alcyesta's hand.

Yermah pressed the spring and revealed a ring, large enough for his thumb, and having a fine silk tissue evenly fitting its broad band.

"Before removing the contents of this locket, hear me fully," pleaded Ben Hu Barabe. "This treasure was made fast in a leather pouch, which was securely tied to the wing, next the body, of one eagle. Here is the parchment slipped in beside it."

Yermah reached out his hand, but Ben Hu Barabe retained it.

"Thou canst not read without more light. Hold a lantern close by," he ordered.

When the tamane obeyed, Ben Hu Barabe gave Yermah the writing.

Beloved:

The eagle shall lead thee into strange lands. Never again wilt thou be separated from Yermah. Withhold from him all knowledge of the birds until such time as thou shalt find him in great danger.

Then loosen and follow thy guides.

Akaza.

The Dorado was so astonished that he held the parchment on his knee and made no further effort to examine the tissue message for himself.

"Well do I remember how anxious Kerœcia was about this ring. She went every day to superintend its making."

Alcyesta's words aroused Yermah.

Unrolling the tissue, he saw a finely traced map, with a few lines written on the margin:

Yermah, Beloved of the Brotherhood:

Follow the way marked out before thee.

When one bird hovers in the air while the other sits on a rock with cactus flowering at its base, halt thou and receive thy future task from him who was appointed to aid thee.

Go willingly. Thou hast no further mission in Tlamco. Fear not.

I have been before thee — and am with thee even unto the end of time.

Akaza.

The eagles led them southward by sea for many days after leaving Monterey Bay, but on coming ashore they traveled inland until they reached the pueblos of the Colorado.

Here they were evidently expected by the Brotherhood, who reprovisioned and sent them forward.

"Thou art the forerunners of an exodus which will strip this fair land of the white race for ages to come. Ice imprisons every vestige of life to the north, and the seeds of total destruction are already planted in the Llama city. Whither thou goest, we, too, will follow. Peace be thy portion!" solemnly spoke the high-priest in adieu.

It would not have been a very difficult journey down the singularly even plateau stretching beyond the Colorado to far Anahuac, had it not been for the dread scourge of waters flooding the plains and settling in the deep cup now known as Tezcuco Lake.

Nature's tropic prodigality had done much to hide the ugly scars earned in a life and death struggle between the raging water courses and the still smoking mountain peaks muttering curses to the clouds.

It looked as if the earth in trembling fright had shaken everything down, ready for the receding waves to wash into the sea.

Forty long, weary days, the little party pushed ahead.

Cibolo, the gallant, was as resolute and brave as any man among them; but even the eagles seemed to lose their bearings occasionally, and then Yermah called aloud to Akaza:

"Make me to know thy wishes. Humbly and obediently will I follow them."

Instantly, Cibolo's ears would go forward, and with a start he would shy at a dim, hazy outline directly in front of him. First it took the form of Akaza; then, gradually it changed into the beatific countenance of Kerœcia.

In the beginning only Yermah could discern them, but before the journey was completed every member of the party saw and recognized them.

"Thou art under Divine guidance," they said to Yermah, and held him in higher esteem than ever.

On the last day, the eagles circled in the air, screaming uneasily, and refusing to go forward.

"We must be near the place," the wanderers said to each other, in awe-stricken whispers.

"Dost thou not see the rock and the flowering cactus?"

"One eagle sits and the other circles —"

"O Thou seen and unseen powers! Search our hearts, that thou mayst know all our gratitude," cried the Dorado, falling to his knees, and prostrating himself on the ground, an act which was quickly imitated by his comrades.

"I am Gautama," said a voice.

When Yermah looked up, a man old as Akaza, stood making the hierophant sign of blessing over him.

"Rise and receive from me word from thy beloved teacher.

"Fear me not.

"These hands have guided thy puny baby footsteps, and now thou must lend thy strength to me. We have some days yet before thou art at rest."

The survivors were near the ancient site of Tenochtitlan,[1] then a dreary waste of water, with its first city ingulfed, but to have rebirth again and again until the present time.

Gautama was accompanied by two of the Brotherhood and some tamanes, amply provided with food and fresh raiment, which they gave to the travelers.

"Thou art the last admitted, and art the youngest initiate," said Gautama to Yermah, later. "But thine is a special mission. When once in Cholula, I shall tell thee all. Thou art anxiously awaited."

The augmented company went into camp for the rest of the day but they resumed travel shortly after sunrise, the next morning.

The holy city of Cholula [2] did not exist in those days.

There was nothing on the plain but the splendid "Memento for Generations," built by the men of Atlantis, whose descendants were gathered into the hungry maw of the sea.

This massive pile is twice the length of the Pyramid of Cheops, but not nearly so high. A long cir-

[1] City of Mexico.

[2] Cholula was to the primitive Americas, what Jerusalem is to the Christian; Mecca, to the Mohammedan; Benares, to the Brahman.

cular stairway led to its top, which measured an acre in its area, and supported a teocalli — the last temple of the Brotherhood of the White Star which was built in America.

Nothing could be more sublime and beautiful than the view from the top of this pyramid. Toward the west stretches the bold barrier of porphyritic rock which nature has reared around the valley of Mexico, with huge Popocatepetl and Iztaccihuatl standing like two colossal sentinels guarding the entrance to this incomparable region.

The word pyramid means a place of fire, while Palai, or Pele, of the Hawaiians, is the spirit of the volcano center, or precipice of fire, as a pyramid was often called. The Arabic word Alcyone means the center, or cone, the spiritual apex around which the sun and all the sidereal galaxy are circling.

The two mountains represented the masculine potency and the feminine passivity of all which is generated in nature giving all things their proportion. Acting on this principle, the ancient sculptors down to and including Phidias, fixed the respective heights of man and woman as twenty and nineteen palms of one-third of a foot each, up to the organs of casualty and comparison, at the roots of the hair on the forehead.

Comparison with casualty on each side is the psychometric eye — the Cyclopean third eye, scouted by the would-be wise. Comparison is feminine; casualty is masculine.

The union of these forms the true vision of the soul, which, developed to its fullest capacity, gives that mysterious faculty of psychic perception, com-

parison and deduction beyond the intellectual comprehension of ordinary man, and marks the adept.

It was this transcendent power which the Pyramid of Cholula, built to the east of these two volcanoes, symbolized.

Farther in the same direction, towers Orizaba, correlated to the macrocosm, of which the Pyramid of Cholula was the microcosm.

Orizaba equals the height of Popocatepetl, signifying that the adept manifesting energy on the subjective plane is equal *in function* to the cosmic mind.

In this capacity the initiate is Quetzalcoatl, who, like Osiris, Krishna, etc., was black — that is, the unknowable and mysterious in Deity. This is why Quetzalcoatl is always shown with a black face, although he was called the Fair God. He belonged to the white race, and was the Aztec Yermah.

The antediluvians — the men who invented architecture — used the human form, the pyramid, the pentagram, and the interlaced triangles as a basis of measure and form.

The pyramid and pentagram denote the cone, or center, of sacred fire; the interlaced triangles were the balance of spirit and matter; while the obelisk was intended to show the purified nature of man.

The pillar of fire of Jacob was an obelisk. So were Stonehenge, Ellora, the Babel towers of Central America, Babylon and Judea, the gigantic ruins over all Tartary and India, and the totem-pole of the Eskimo — even the tombstones have the same grand origin.

That the obelisk everywhere outside of Egypt became a sign of the phallus does not alter its primal significance nor militate against it.

The pyramid was often called the Pillar of the Cosmos because it is the ideal form of the principle of stability, and cannot be assailed by any of the four elements.

Its tapering form guards it from destruction by earthquake; nor can it be overturned; and it is probably the only fireproof structure in the world.

The immense base and weight render it secure from floods; nor can the wind get sufficient purchase to do any damage.

Even the insidious encroachments of Time itself are baffled and outwitted by this cunningly constructed pile. It is, also, a perfect instrument for estimating the weight of the earth; and, it is an excellent astronomical observatory.

In its central chamber the temperature never varies.

Does any one believe this is the result of chance?

Will any part of to-day's civilization survive the same flight of years?

Posterity has no claim on us which individualism — the god of the age — respects; nor will it require a cataclysm to destroy any of the works of to-day on any plane.

Science and invention make many discoveries, but our mental flights fall far short of the ancients in the discernment of the basic principles of philosophy.

In religion we have lost the meaning of the simplest symbols, and, apparently, we do not understand where to place the credit for the principles and precepts we profess to believe and practice.

Gautama led the travelers on by the west, while far away to the east was seen the conical head of Orizaba, soaring high into the clouds.

Near by was the barren, though beautifully shaped, Malinche Sierras, casting broad shadows over the plains of Tlaxcala. At their feet lay the Pyramid of Cholula, reposing in denuded gardens in the once fairest portion of the plateau of Puebla.

"Thou seest but a remnant of former glory," said Gautama. "We, too, have bowed to the chastening rod. Only such as climbed the long flight of steps to the top of the pillar escaped destruction. Thou, too, art able to bear witness?"

It was like probing an old wound, but Yermah answered bravely:

"The lash found my tender parts, but I am learning to be content."

"It is to assist thee in this endeavor that I am come. When once thou art ascended to the teocalli heights, thou mayst not return again until thou art fully prepared. Thy next labor is to quash doubtful inspiration. Thou art still leaning on thy earth loves, when thou art commanded to have but one ideal —"

"I stand face to face with inner consciousness, and hear the still small voice."

"He hears the bells, but he does not know where they hang," commented the priests of the Brotherhood, smiling at each other.

"Seclusion in rarefied atmosphere, where the whole basin of the earth has been purified, will give peace beyond thy present capacity for understanding," returned Gautama.

"Thy will be done!" responded Yermah.

"Thou art a doer of penance, and must be able to say literally, 'Thy will be done!'"

The devotees were nearing the pyramid, when they

were met by a delegation of priests, who crowned them with garlands, and conducted them up the first flight of steps. On the truncated face of the terrace was the inscription:

BEFORE THE LIGHT WAS OBSCURED
THIS MEMENTO FOR GENERATIONS
WAS BUILT BY SERPENT KINGS
THEY WERE SCATTERED OVER THE EARTH
TO CARRY TRUTH AND WISDOM
THEY WILL COME AGAIN
TO RECEIVE THE TREASURES
HIDDEN IN THY BOWELS
ALL MEN WILL SPEAK AND HEAR THE
I AM I

The thoughtful band was allowed to rest at this juncture of their pilgrimage after partaking of some refreshment; but they ascended to the top of the pile in time to see the sunset.

Next morning, Yermah called his small aggregation of faithful adherents together, and told them that he had received Akaza's final commands.

"It imposes upon me seclusion in this spot. There is work for me here," he said with an odd smile. "The temple requires a central spire, and I shall build and cover it with pure gold. Go thou all to the valley, and make thy life apart from me. I love thee well and need thee sadly, but even this love must be merged into the universal."

"What wilt thou have me do?" asked Hanabusa.

"Go thou and build a balsa capable of riding the storm and stress of an angry sea. In twenty lunations more thou must be prepared to go voyaging with me."

"To what task dost thou appoint me?" It was Ben Hu Barabe who spoke.

"Go thou amongst thy fellows and teach them the arts of peace. Show them how to coax back fertility to the denuded soil, and build up civil power, until I call thee."

"Hast thou no thought for me?" asked Ildiko.

"The Brotherhood will guard thee until such time as a new Temple of Venus shall arise on this fair plain. Seek thou knowledge diligently, that thou mayst be able to teach the virgins committed to thy care. When thou art separated from thy beloved Alcyesta, thou wilt be conducted to a refuge in this teocalli, where other women are waiting to return to their homes."

Seeing that she made a brave effort to keep back tears, he added gently:

"Be not downcast. The first days of loneliness will find me near thee. Shouldst thou need, call, and I shall come straightway."

To Alcyesta, he said, covering her hand with both his own, and holding it close to his breast:

"Promise if thine unborn shall be of thy sex, thou wilt name her, Kerœcia?"

"I promise," she returned, "and if it should be a son, wilt thou give him thy name?"

"I shall be to thy son what Akaza was to me, but thou must call him Gautamozin. In after years, he will understand the significance of this command." [1]

[1] Gautamozin — meaning son of Guatama — was the nephew of Montezuma, and the spiritual leader of the Aztecs at the time of the conquest. He was the last hierophant of the Brotherhood of Quetzalcoatl, the Aztec Messiah. He defended Mexico City and was tortured and slain by Cortez. The statue erected in his honor in the Paseo de la Reforma, Mexico City, is one of the finest monuments on the North American continent.

CHAPTER THIRTY

YERMAH RETURNS TO THE MOUNTAIN PEAKS OF ATLANTIS

THE remnant of the survivors obeyed the will of Yermah, the leader, and for one year he was a recluse, giving himself up to solitary meditation, save when Gautama came to converse with him.

In that time Yermah developed rectitude of judgment, correct appreciation, breadth of view, and an all-roundness of perception, habitually associated with a well-balanced and perfectly poised mind and character.

As an initiate, he had marvelous sensibility vibrating to, and stirred by the faintest touch, yet remaining steadfast in purpose, because he saw all things in their proper proportion and estimated them at their real value.

Possessed of discrimination, Yermah perceived the relative permanency of all that had befallen him. Measuring all by the standard of the Eternal, he was not swept out of equilibrium by any temporary or illusive appearance.

Exaggeration, over-coloring, all that savored of unreality or falsehood, was absolutely foreign to his nature. Yermah, the hierophant, was no cold abstraction, too self-absorbed to think and to feel deeply — but he was *strong in the love that gives,* equally joyful

though he who received knew not the source. He never repaid injury or scorn. This quality showed itself in many ways.

In quick and ready sympathy; in alertness to see; in watchfulness to note the needs of the hour; in the constant, instinctive attitude of mind which spontaneously saw and felt every opportunity to give — whether it were service or sympathy, silence or speech, presence or absence — in short every attribute of character defining utter selflessness, rounded and molded the strong individuality of YERMAH, THE DORADO.

When the recluse began to mingle freely with the Brotherhood, he was quickly made aware of all that was transpiring, not only in the pueblo of Cholula, but also among outside colonies.

There was never a day when some pilgrim did not climb the zigzag stairways to see, and to receive advice from him. No attention was paid to their comings and goings, and it was not thought unusual when a stranger approached and asked for Yermah.

"Cezardis, why hast thou left Tlamco?" asked Yermah, as he embraced his visitor.

"I am come to request thee to return. Thou hast many devoted friends there to mourn thy absence."

"Is not Setos master of the councilmen?"

"Yes; and he has most grievously taxed and outraged the Azes."

"I am not surprised," said Yermah, calmly. "He is by nature fiery and imperious, combative and bloodthirsty. The restraining influence of Saturn held him in check for a time, but now it will add malefic tendencies."

"Of late, he has been trying to bring about chem-

ical affinities, investigating secret laws, and dabbling in the knowledge forbidden an earthy mortal. He overeats, and sends in haste for a shaman and priest while all Tlamco waits. He will allow no business transacted when he is sick. Fully half our time is spent in the temples praying for him. We have no choice, as he is the self-appointed guardian of our morals and compels attendance."

Cezardis's words, looks and actions betrayed his feelings.

"How is it with Imos?"

"He is given unlimited power, because he allowed Setos to espouse Oahspe, the vestal. This power he uses to advance his own interests."

"Dost thou say Setos hath another wife? I gave him Rahula."

"So thou didst. But she bore him no heir; and on this pretext, Setos has two wives, instead of one; and, he makes it lawful for any man to do the same."

"Poor hot-tempered Rahula! How doth she bear the new affliction?"

"She hath obliterated her own individuality until she is an echo whom Setos values no more than the mats under his feet."

Yermah sent Cezardis away for rest and refreshment before giving an answer, when he was again urged to return to Tlamco.

As soon as he was alone Yermah's mind reverted to its normal condition, and he was entirely dispassionate in his reply.

"I cannot comply with thy wishes, Cezardis," he said. "Not that I dread the conflict inevitable with the overthrow of Setos. I have another and more difficult battle to fight."

"I have made oath not to return without thee, and I will not. The whole country is preparing to follow thee south, and thou art the only one capable of holding them back."

"Nothing can stay the exodus. It is the breaking up of old lines. A new dispensation is beginning, and the present order must pass forever."

"Wilt thou let me serve thee? I would have come with thee in the beginning, had I known."

Cezardis was aware that Yermah could not refuse to accept his offer. It was an old-time custom for one man to serve another, voluntarily, and the servant's was the honored position. To serve sweetly in any capacity was the aspiration animating this entire dispensation.

The Dorado smiled as he said:

"Thou wilt be the last to make such an offer. The generations following will reverse our beliefs and practices. Go thou to Ben Hu Barabe, and tell him to give Hanabusa leave to stock his balsa with food and raiment for five men. See to it that there is plenty, for thou art of the company."

Yermah worked incessantly for several days making a llama of silver, as an emblem of suffering innocence. Its belly was a golden sunburst, and it was seated upon the back of an eagle, rescuing a rabbit from the fangs of a serpent. This represented the unequal conflict between good and evil; but the serpent being obliged to give up its prey, manifested the final triumph of goodness.

There were eight altars in the temple; and, at sunset on the last day of his stay, Yermah placed the llama on the altar facing the east. Simultaneously with this act, Gautama headed a procession at the

base of the pyramid, which slowly climbed to the top.

The worshipers performed a sacrifice on each of the four terraces, and did not reach the temple until midnight.

They found Yermah in the great, dark structure, intently watching the constellation of the Pleiades. As Alcyone approached the zenith he sprang forward with a glad cry, and vigorously swinging a copper hammer, made the sparks fly from a granite rock.

The venerable Gautama held the cotton, and carefully nursed the sparks into a blaze. As the light streamed up toward the heavens, shouts of joy and triumph burst forth — for once more the children of men received a direct ray from the spiritual sun.

Carriers with torches lighted at the blazing beacon ran in every direction, carrying the cheering element to every part of the country. Long before sunrise it was brightening the altars and hearthstones everywhere.

Yermah sent up orisons from the eastern altar, and then took an affectionate farewell of the priests in attendance, but before beginning to descend he gazed long at the matchless scenery below.

Soft spring verdure lay everywhere, and he drew courage and inspiration from the fact that the lower forms of creation neither sulked nor held back because the elements had been remorselessly cruel to them.

Wherever there was enough soil to support plant-life, flowers and grasses put forth, and all nature was making a brave effort to swing back into harmony.

Gautama walked with him, and so did an unseen host led by Akaza and Kerœcia.

The Dorado wore all the insignia of his office. He had a cloth-of-gold robe, and a pale violet mantle. On his head was a high cap of the same color crested with jewels. There were jeweled sandals on his feet, and he carried a caduceus of silver running through a circle, which was a gold serpent with its tail in its mouth.

At the foot of the pyramid Yermah found Alcyesta and her infant son waiting for his blessing. Beside her was Ildiko, in the white robes of a high-priestess, surrounded by the few vestals possible to the depleted numbers.

Ben Hu Barabe, Hanabusa and Cezardis were ready to accompany him.

Taking a handful of salt and holding the baby up to the sun with the left hand, Yermah spake:

"By right of initiation, I name thee Gautamozin, and by the power of adeptship endow thee with Brotherhood inheritance. Thou shalt have a long line; but the last of thy name shall be as I am, a sacrifice to another order of being."

As Yermah ceased speaking, he sprinkled salt over the child's face, and at this juncture a tamane approached leading Cibolo. With his disengaged arm Yermah drew the horse's head down until its nose touched the baby's soft cheek, and when Cibolo had tasted a morsel of the salt his master laid his face close to the horse's jaw, and said softly:

"Thou wilt be a good and faithful friend to Gautamozin, as thou hast been to me? Thine shalt be a name to conjure with — as thy love and obedience

hath been worthy of example. Farewell, my comrade! Thy days shall be as the sunny hours."

From his breast Yermah drew the locket containing Kerœcia's ring. Taking Alcyesta's hand, he silently slipped it on her finger, while unchecked tears coursed down her cheeks.

Turning to Ildiko, he handed her the locket. Facing them all, he said:

"Be of good cheer! A long era of peace and prosperity is for thee and thine. Thou art saved from the floods for a divine purpose. Let this knowledge be thy secret refuge, lest thou be tempted to depart from the way."

At the water's edge he embraced and blessed each one.

"Grieve not for me. In the fullness of time I shall come again."

The young men went out on flower-laden rafts with him, and cast gold and emeralds into the sea in his honor.

The stone of promise signified renewal after the cataclysm, and Yermah was El Dorado,—*"He of the golden heart."*

The men on the raft strained their vision to catch a last glimpse of the balsa, as it was known that he was going away for purification, and they believed implicitly that he would come again.

It was not long before the people on shore began the weary watch for his return, which makes Cortez's conquest of later days so pathetic and pitiful.

The heart aches with the memory of the treachery and cruelty of the Conquistadors at Cholula, after its inhabitants had sent Cortez a helmet filled with gold nuggets, because they saw with surprise that he

whom they mistook for their Fair God, valued this metal.

The gold, itself, thrown up in the days of the earth agony, lay untouched for centuries, but every precept of the "golden one" [1] was cherished as priceless gifts over all the Americas.

The tribes had different local versions of him, where they built pyramids and teocallis in his honor, sculptured his sayings in enduring granite, repeated his exploits in poetry and song, until finally his name and fame excited the cupidity of the European adventurers who sought the Golden Fleece in crusades and voyages of discovery.

The American version of the Argonauts' expedition for the golden apples, under Columbus, began in violence and ended in crime.

But the search for the fabled El Dorado did not end here.

Like a veritable will-o'-the-wisp, it led some into the fever-infested swamps of the Orinoco, in South America,[2] and finally induced Coronado to push northward into Kansas, after he had nearly perished in the desert sands of the Colorado. He pounced down upon the Zuni pueblo, and tried hard to persuade himself that he had found the land of Quivira, though he vainly tried to locate the seven cities of Cibolo.

The magic words "El Dorado" attracted another

[1] All the heroes and ideal men of primitive times were sun-gods. Buddha was the shining one. Zoroaster (zoe, light; aster, star); was called the glittering one. The Son of Man came clothed in the glory of the sun. When the padres attempted to teach the natives of America the story of Jesus, they exclaimed: "El Dorado!" Such at least is the Spanish translation of what they called their own spiritual leader.

[2] History of the Conquest of Mexico.

bond of gold-seekers, who have made the name and the country their very own.

In their wake are the forerunners of the men and women who will make California [1] a great center of occult knowledge — the alchemical gold, corresponding to her mineral wealth.

* * * * * * *

"The land! The land! O my beloved country! How art thou humbled by misfortune! I know not thy desolate bosom!" cried Yermah, springing ashore upon the island of Teneriffe, the mountain peak of Poseidon's kingdom, his lost Atlantis.

"I kiss thy blackened and charred face! Thou mother of the white race! Thou source of all learning! Grant that thy dependencies may not forget and deny thee!"

Gautama, too, had prostrated himself, while a stifled, smothered feeling kept him silent. For a time, Yermah forgot that the three bronzed men who stood looking at the shepherds gathered about the shore were not Atlantians.

It seemed doubtful what kind of a reception they were to receive, until Yermah called to the natives in their own tongue.

"Our Dorado! Come to us out of the sea!" they shouted almost beside themselves with joy.

"O thou blessed one! Dost thou see the scourge laid upon us?

"Thy father, Poseidon, and all thy countrymen,

[1] Esoteric students everywhere understand that California is one of the occult eyes of the world, because it still retains the magnetism of prehistoric times, never having been visited by the ice ages nor the flood, and only in recent geologic reckoning being partially purified by fire. Its Sanscrit name is Kali (time) and purna (fulfillment).

save us, poor Guanches, are perished. Evil days have fallen on Majorata. Dost thou not see the new mountain choking and filling her wide-open mouth? Tell us how thou art come."

"Thy servant brother, Hanabusa, skilled in sail-craft, is my deliverer."

"The sun and stars lent countenance to our venture," said he, "save when obscured by a passing shadow. Then the corposant ran in balls and spirals from sheet to sheet, and we could not fail."

"I am of the Monbas," said Ben Hu Barabe, "far to the west, and I am brother to thee in sorrow. The destructive power of the Divine took all my people."

"And I am of the Mazamas," said Cezardis, coming forward. "My country lies under sheets of ice mountains high, and no living thing is there."

"Misfortune is known in the land of Mexi, whence I come," said Gautama. "Flood and fire hidden in the earth made us tremble for days lest we all should perish."

"The Azes, too —" Hanabusa was not allowed to finish his sentence.

"Thou art of our blood!" exclaimed the Guanches, in a breath.

"Never again shalt thou depart from us. Thou wert with the Dorado?"

"From the beginning," he answered.

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

FINAL PEACE IS MADE WITH COSMIC LAW

THESE Guanches were splendid specimens of manhood, the remote forefathers of the warriors who, five hundred years ago, held their European conquerors at bay for more than a hundred years — never more than a handful of men at any time.

First the fierce and ruthless Normans, then the Portuguese, and lastly the Spanish, laid a destroying hand on the brave Guanches. Now, there is but little more than their goats left of the surviving Atlantians. These goats are of a Vandyke brown, with long twisted horns, venerable beards, and hair lengthening almost to a lion's mane.

Teneriffe was the Island of the Blessed of the Hindus, the Elysian Fields of the Greeks, and the Tlapallapan of the Aztecs.

The Greeks had their Hermes; the Norsemen, Ymer; the Egyptians, Kema; all words correlated to, and having the same significance as Yermah,[1] which means the Divine Germ incarnate.

As El Dorado, his love nature was typified, but he transmuted passion, and became a god among men. He was Votan to the Quiches; to the Mayas, he was Kukulcan; and to the Peruvians he was

[1] Yermo and Yermina are diminutives and corruptions of Guillermo, the Spanish for William, and are in common use among the natives of Mexico and the neighboring states.

Manco-capac — all types of the same character, and emanations from the same civilizing source.

The next morning the Guanches made a part of the company which gave escort to Yermah, as he essayed climbing the still smoking peak. After they had passed the line of vegetation there was naught to be seen save a sea of red rocks, and thirsty yellow pumice.

The scorching sun and blue, unvaried sky condemned everything far and near to barrenness and desolation forever.

Climbing higher, there was no solid rock, no soft earth — nothing but black stones, piled one upon the other so loosely that under the crenellated edge of the sky-line were frequent glimpses of daylight.

It was not necessary for the Guanches to explain that a marvelous bombardment of the heavens had but recently taken place. The wrenching and heaving, when the crater of eruption was active, had cracked the cooling and hardening surface repeatedly, sending masses of cinders and stones rattling down only to be caught and piled one over another fathoms deep.

The granular lava had crystals of white felspar mixed in it, liked chopped straw, which were formed into spherical shells, veined, curved and frothy. Under the varying effects of pressure, the still pasty mass was rolling, falling and crystallizing in grotesque cascades.

In some places the trade-winds had hardened them into wild, dreamlike faces, while some were pictures of contending beasts. Yermah could hear them grinding and crushing in low snarls and growls as they rolled heavily downward.

Many times these writhing and twisting forms threatened to remain forever suspended in mid-air.

The Dorado imagined that he recognized some of the effigies, and was made dizzy and seasick by their ceaseless progression in a community of pain.

How inexpressibly varied were the colors, bathed in the brilliant light of a vertical tropical sun, undimmed by impurities of the lower atmosphere!

The tired and thirsty party halted at the Guajara Springs near the spectral Lunar Rocks of the Cañadas, standing like white teeth newly cast from a granite mouth opened wide enough to admit a tongue of lava thousands of feet higher in air.

These grayish white spikes line the " Road of the Guanche Kings " where the crater of elevation sticks out its ragged and torn lips, eternal witnesses to one of nature's most stupendous debauches.

Yermah groaned in spirit as he looked across the dreary waste, and he mourned unfeignedly for his lost people. It seemed to need this grand, harmonious outburst of unseen forces to give voice to the wild and passionate utterances seeking vent in his heart. Nature speaks to each soul alone, and no mortal may interfere with the communion.

In taking a tender farewell of his comrades, Yermah appointed the life work of each loyal heart; nor had he the least doubt of their faithful obedience.

" Go thou to Egypt, Gautama, and tell them the task is finished."

" Mayst thou be eternally at one with the Divine."

" And thou, Cezardis, journey on beyond Egypt, until thou art come to Lassa. Find Kadmon, and tell him all is well."

"And thou, Yermah, wilt thou come with me?" asked Ben Hu Barabe.

"No. Thou must teach Gautamozin in my stead. He will learn from the Brotherhood. Farewell, beloved! I shall return, but not now."

"Thou art come to thine own, Hanabusa," he continued. "Stay thou here with the despoiled."

He kissed each one on brow and cheeks, murmuring affectionate words of encouragement and farewell.

"Go now to the sea level. I am come to the end of my journey, and would fain be alone."

It was difficult for him to persuade the Guanches to leave him.

"Thou wilt see me again," he promised; "but at another time."

The shepherds turned again and again, kissing their hands to him as long as he was in sight.

Weary and exhausted, Yermah slept soundly until the first streak of dawn appeared in the lowest place on the horizon, while the long glade of zodiacal light shot up amongst the stars of Orion and Taurus.

Yermah knew how to interpret this heavenly sign. Gradually a reddish hue appeared, and as soon as the lonely watcher comprehended its meaning the zodiacal light faded, and golden yellow gradually overcame and drove out the red tinge, grown to vermilion.

The cold region of gray at its upper limit blushed a rosy pink as the first point of the solar disk leaped from behind a horizon of ocean and clouds.[1]

The Dorado performed ablutions with marked care, dressed himself in fresh, white linen, and before

[1] Chas. Piazzi Smyth, at Teneriffe.

the sun was an hour old was picking his way to the higher regions.

Finally, a bright spot of fire appeared in the malpais, then a lengthening red and smoking line, widening and growing deeper as it flowed down the mountain side.

Nothing but the extreme high altitude made the heat bearable. Occasionally a fresh tongue of fire shot up from the fountain head, and the whole mass of fluid lava and scoria felt the impulse. Alternate cascades of fire and dross thundered precipitately against the lower slopes.

The tense and elastic vapors in their struggles for freedom here made one collective heave to gain the light of day, as the Island of Atlantis slowly settled down on the bed of the ocean, and the crater of eruption came up like a huge lava bubble.

During this process the cold atmosphere did effective work on the outside.

The mass was hidebound with hardening stone; but the violence of the heated gases made a grievous rent in the wrinkled coating, thus causing the mountain to shake as with the ague.

Finally, the internal pressure being too great, the massive shell was shattered into a thousand pieces. Not once, but many times, has this battle between heated gases and cold air taken place in the years since then, as the extinct craters amply testify, before the pent-up, unruly spirits of the mountain finally escaped.

Prior to reaching his destination, Yermah discovered a lava figure resembling Kerœcia, kneeling with her hands joined in prayer, and appearing to have a heavy mantle thrown over her shoulders.

This effigy is still one of the many fantastic shapes pointing the way to the Ice Cavern — that wondrous sepulcher of the Dorado.

It was not then an ice-cold spring banked with snow, in the midst of desolation, but was a vent where three conical mouths of the volcano flared open from different quarters, and hardened there in a dome-shaped elevation.

Lying to the south is a particularly large mass of scoria turned upside down, which has been used from time immemorial by the Guanches as a place to pack and make up their parcels of cavern snow before venturing to carry it under a vertical sun, thirty miles to the capital below.

It was nightfall when Yermah reached this spot, where he found the pentagram mentioned in Akaza's will.

Nature had made it for him of whitish felspar on the western side of the scoria table. Certain that he had been guided aright, he sat down to await the appearance of Venus in the eastern horizon.

Astronomers call it lateral refraction when a star oscillates and makes images in the heated atmosphere; but to Yermah it had a different significance. He first saw Venus seven degrees high, apparently motionless. The planet oscillated up and down, then horizontally, outlining a Maltese cross — the primordial sign of matter.[1]

Finally, it rose perpendicularly, descended sideways at an angle, and returned to the spot whence it started, completing a triangle — the universal emblem of spirit.

While Yermah sat on the rock lost in reverie, the

[1] Von Humboldt at Teneriffe.

sub-conscious man made its final peace with cosmic law. His entire life passed before him in successive events when he knew that here was the end; but with this realization he leaned confidently upon the Divine.

Under the impulse of utter helplessness, he arose and kissed his hand reverently to the evening star — a practice taught him in the nursery.

As a child it was his first act of adoration before his tongue learned to fashion appropriate speech or his mind to comprehend veneration. In this supreme moment, he turned back to that time insistently.

Finally, he knelt — and lifting up his arms as if to embrace a heavenly ray, Yermah kissed the air as if it were the raiment of God. Turning his face up to the sky, he closed his eyes in silent prayer.

Rising, he approached the mouth of the crater which faces north. He could hear the angry, hissing roar of the subterranean fires, and the scorching flames licked out at him as he fed them his belongings one by one.

But a short time previous, Yermah had passed his thirty-third birthday, and, as he now stood ready for self-immolation, he was in the prime and glory of vigorous manhood.

He had the illumined face of a saint, and was uplifted by that spirit which sustained martyrs in the after years. Even his fair young body seemed to be spiritualized.

"O Thou Ineffable One! Thou Spirit of Fire! Take that which is thine! Lap thy purifying tongue about me, and leave no dross!"

The desolation about him was the veritable home of black despair. Of what use was it to cry out to

the deadly calm of the rarefied air, amidst the crushing, strangling and appalling stillness?

Coming nearer, Yermah looked down into the white heat of the pink-throated cavern.

"O Thou Sacred Fire! Thy kiss was welcome to her sweet lips. Feast Thou on mine!"

With the fervor of an enthusiast he rushed forward to fling himself headlong into the yawning chasm, but a dazzling effulgence obscured the way, and a voice from the land of shadows said:

"Yermah, son of light, no further sacrifice is required of thee!"

It was the gentle, unseen hand of Akaza which halted the action * * * then a Higher Power suffered Yermah's lifeless body to be at rest.

"Kerœcia, beloved, receive thy twin spirit!" he cried, in passing.

In the transcendent radiance of the Presence enveloping all, the twain appeared — transfigured and glorified.

Being thus reunited, Kerœcia realized for the first time that she was out of the body.

* * * * * * *

Yermah was neither Krishna, nor the Christ, but the Ideal Man of all time, and of all people.

He was LOVE, the eternal mystery; that love which Madame de Staël has said confounds all notion of time, effaces all memory of a beginning and all fear of an end.

FINIS